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MERCEDES OF CASTILE.

VOL. I

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MERCEDES OF CASTILE.

B. 1624

A ROMANCE

OF THE DAYS OF COLUMBUS.

By J. FENIMORE COOPER, Esq.

AUTHOR OF

"THE PILOT," "THE SPY," "THE RED ROVER,"
"THE BRAVO," "THE PATHFINDER," etc.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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PREFACE.

So much has been written of late years touching the discovery of America, that it would not be at all surprising should there exist a disposition in a certain class of readers to deny the accuracy of all the statements in this Work. Some may refer to history, with a view to prove that there never were such persons as our hero and heroine, and fancy that by establishing these facts, they completely destroy the authenticity of the whole book. In answer to this anticipated objection, we will state, that after carefully perusing several of the Spanish writers, from Cervantes to the translator of the journal of Columbus, the Alpha and Omega of peninsular literature, and after having read both

Irving and Prescott from beginning to end, we do not find a syllable in either of them, that we understand to be conclusive evidence, or indeed to be any evidence at all, on the portions of our subject that are likely to be disputed. Until some solid affirmative proof, therefore, can be produced against us, we shall hold our case to be made out, and rest our claims to be believed on the authority of our own statements. Nor do we think there is anything either unreasonable or unusual in this course, as perhaps the greater portion of that which is daily and hourly offered to the credence of the public, rests on the same species of testimony, — with the trifling difference that we state truths, with a profession of fiction, while the great moral caterers of the age state fiction with the profession of truth. If any advantage can be fairly obtained over us, in consequence of this trifling discrepancy, we must submit.

There is one point, notwithstanding, concerning which it may be well to be frank at once.

The narrative of the "Voyage to Cathay" has been written with the journal of the Admiral before us; or, rather with all of that journal which has been given to the world through the agency of a very incompetent and meagre editor. Nothing is plainer than the general fact that this person did not always understand his author; and in one particular circumstance he has written so obscurely, as not a little to embarrass even a novelist, whose functions naturally include an entire familiarity with the thoughts, emotions, characters, and, occasionally, with the unknown fates of the subjects of his pen. The nautical day formerly commenced at meridian; and, with all our native ingenuity and high professional prerogatives, we have not been able to discover whether the editor of the journal has adopted that mode of counting time, or whether he has condescended to use the more vulgar and irrational practice of landsmen. It is our opinion, however, that in the spirit of impartiality which becomes an historian, he has adopted both.

As respects the minor characters of this work, very little need be said. Every one knows that Columbus had seamen in his vessels, and that he brought some of the natives of the islands he had discovered back with him to Spain. The reader is now made much more intimately acquainted with certain of these individuals, we will venture to say, than he can possibly be by the perusal of any work previously written. As for the subordinate incidents connected with the more familiar events of the age, it is hoped they will be found so completely to fill up this branch of the subject, as to render future investigations unnecessary.

December,
1840.

MERCEDES OF CASTILE.

CHAPTER I.

There was knocking that shook the marble floor,
And a voice at the gate, which said—
That the Cid Ruy Diez, the Campeador,
Was there in his arms array'd.——

MRS. HEMANS.

WHETHER we take the pictures of the inimitable Cervantes, or of that scarcely less meritorious author from whom Le Sage has borrowed his immortal tale, for our guides; whether we confide in the graver legends of history, or put our trust in the accounts of modern travellers, the time has scarcely ever existed when the inns of Spain were good, or the roads safe. These are two of the blessings of civilization which the people of the peninsula

would really seem destined never to attain; for in all ages we hear, or have heard, of wrongs done the traveller equally by the robber and the host. If such are the facts to-day, such also were the facts in the middle of the fifteenth century, the period to which we desire to carry back the reader in imagination.

At the commencement of the month of October, in the year of our Lord 1469, John of Trastamara reigned in Aragon, holding his court at a place called Zaragosa, a town lying on the Ebro, the name of which is supposed to be a corruption of Cæsar Augustus, and a city that has become celebrated in our own times, under the more Anglicised term of Saragossa, for its deeds in arms. John of Trastamara, or, as it was more usual to style him, agreeably to the nomenclature of kings, John II, was one of the most sagacious monarchs of his age; but he had become impoverished by many conflicts with the turbulent, or, as it may be more courtly to say, the liberty-loving Catalonians; had frequently

enough to do to maintain his seat on the throne; possessed a party-coloured empire that included within its sway, besides his native Aragon with its dependencies of Valencia and Catalonia, Sicily and the Balearic Islands, with some very questionable rights in Navarre. By the will of his elder brother and predecessor, the crown of Naples had descended to an illegitimate son of the latter, else would that kingdom have been added to the list. The King of Aragon had seen a long and troubled reign; and, at this very moment, his treasury was nearly exhausted by his efforts to subdue the truculent Catalans, though he was nearer a triumph than he could then foresee, his competitor, the Duke of Lorraine, dying suddenly only two short months after the precise period chosen for the commencement of our tale. But it is denied to man to look into the future; and, on the 9th of the month just mentioned, the ingenuity of the royal treasurer was most sorely taxed, there having arisen an unexpected demand for a considerable sum of

money, at the very moment that the army was about to disband itself for the want of pay, and the public coffers contained only the very moderate sum of three hundred *Enriquez*, or Henrys,—a gold coin named after a previous monarch, and which had a value not far from that of the modern ducat, or our own quarter eagle. The matter, however, was too pressing to be deferred, and even the objects of the war were considered as secondary to those connected with this suddenly-conceived and more private enterprise. Councils were held, money-dealers were cajoled or frightened, and the confidants of the court were very manifestly in a state of great and earnest excitement. At length, the time of preparation appeared to be passed, and the instant of action arrived. Curiosity was relieved, and the citizens of Saragossa were permitted to know that their sovereign was about to send a solemn embassy, on matters of high moment, to his neighbour, kinsman, and ally, the monarch of Castile. In 1469, Henry, also of Trastamara, sat upon the throne of the ad-

joining kingdom, under the title of Henry IV. He was the grandson, in the male line, of the brother of John II.'s father, and consequently a first-cousin, once removed, of the monarch of Aragon. Notwithstanding this affinity, and the strong family interests that might be supposed to unite them, it required many friendly embassies to preserve the peace between the two monarchs; and the announcement of that which was about to depart, produced more satisfaction than wonder in the streets of the town.

Henry of Castile, though he reigned over broader and richer peninsular territories than his relative of Aragon, had his cares and troubles also. He had been twice married, having repudiated his first consort, Blanche of Aragon, to wed Joanna of Portugal, a princess of a levity of character so marked, as not only to bring great scandal on the court generally, but to throw so much distrust on the birth of her only child, a daughter, as to push discontent to disaffection, and eventually to deprive the infant itself of the rights of royalty.

Henry's father, like himself, had been twice married, and the issue of the second union was a son and a daughter, Alfonso and Isabella; the latter becoming subsequently illustrious, under the double titles of the Queen of Castile, and of the Catholic. The luxurious impotency of Henry, as a monarch, had driven a portion of his subjects into open rebellion. Three years preceding that selected for our opening, his brother Alfonso had been proclaimed king in his stead, and a civil war had raged throughout his provinces. This war had been recently terminated by the death of Alfonso, when the peace of the kingdom was temporarily restored by a treaty, in which Henry consented to the setting aside of his own daughter,—or rather of the daughter of Joanna of Portugal,—and to the recognition of his half-sister Isabella as the rightful heiress of the throne. The last concession was the result of dire necessity; and, as might have been expected, it led to many secret and violent measures, with a view to defeat its objects. Among the other expedients adopted

by the King,—or it might be better to say, by his favourites, the inaction and indolence of the self-indulgent but kind-hearted prince being proverbial,—with a view to counteract the probable consequences of the expected accession of Isabella, were various schemes to control her will, and guide her policy, by giving her hand, first to a subject, with a view to reduce her power, and subsequently to various foreign princes, who were thought to be more or less suited to the furtherance of such schemes. Just at this moment, indeed, the marriage of the Princess was one of the greatest objects of Spanish prudence. The son of the King of Aragon was one of the suitors for the hand of Isabella; and most of those who heard of the intended departure of the embassy, naturally enough believed that the mission had some connection with that great stroke of Aragonese policy.

Isabella had the reputation of learning, modesty, discretion, piety, and beauty, besides being the acknowledged heiress of so enviable a crown; and there were many competitors

for her hand. Among them were to be ranked French, English, and Portuguese princes, besides him of Aragon to whom we have already alluded. Different favourites supported different pretenders, struggling to effect their several purposes by the usual intrigues of courtiers and partisans; while the royal maiden herself, who was the object of so much competition and rivalry, observed a discreet and womanly decorum, even while firmly bent on indulging her most womanly and dearest sentiments. Her brother, the King, was in the South, pursuing his pleasures; and, long accustomed to dwell in comparative solitude, the Princess was earnestly occupied in arranging her own affairs, in a way that she believed would most conduce to her own happiness. After several attempts to entrap her person, from which she had only escaped by the prompt succour of the forces of her friends, she had taken refuge in Leon, in the capital of which province, or kingdom as it was sometimes called, Valladolid, she temporarily took up her abode. As Henry, however, still re-

mained in the vicinity of Granada, it is in that direction we must look for the route taken by the embassy.

The cortége left Saragossa, by one of the southern gates, early in the morning of a glorious autumnal day. There was the usual escort of lances,—for this the troubled state of the country demanded; bearded nobles well mailed,—for few, who offered an inducement to the plunderer, ventured on the highway without this precaution; a long train of sumpter mules; and a host of those who, by their guise, were half menials and half soldiers. The gallant display drew crowds after the horses' heels; and, together with some prayers for success, a vast deal of crude and shallow conjecture, as is still the practice with the uninstructed and gossiping, was lavished on the probable objects and results of the journey. But curiosity has its limits, and even the gossip occasionally grows weary; and, by the time the sun was setting, most of the multitude had already forgotten to think and speak of the parade of the morning. As the

night drew on, however, the late pageant was still the subject of discourse between two soldiers, who belonged to the guard of the western gate, or that which opened on the road to the province of Burgos. These worthies were loitering away the hours in the listless manner common to men on watch, and the spirit of discussion and of critical censure had survived the thoughts and bustle of the day.

"If Don Alonso de Carbajal thinketh to ride far in that guise," observed the elder of the two idlers, "he would do well to look sharp to his followers, for the army of Aragon never sent forth a more scurvily appointed guard than that he hath this day led through the southern gate, notwithstanding the glitter of housings and the clangour of trumpets. We could have furnished lances from Valencia more befitting a king's embassy, I tell thee, Diego; ay, and worthier knights to lead them, than these of Aragon. But, if the King is content, it ill becomes soldiers, like thee and me, to be dissatisfied."

"There are many who think, Roderique,

that it had been better to spare the money lavished in this courtly letter-writing, to pay the brave men who so freely shed their blood in order to subdue the rebellious Barcelans."

"This is always the way, boy, between debtor and creditor. Don John owes you a few maravedis, and you grudge him every enriquez he spends on his necessities. I am an older soldier, and have learned the art of paying myself, when the treasury is too poor to save me the trouble."

"That might do in a foreign war, when one is battling against the Moor, for instance: but, after all, these Catalans are as good Christians as we are ourselves; some of them are as good subjects; and it is not as easy to plunder a countryman as to plunder an infidel."

"Easier, by, twenty-fold; for the one expects it, and, like all in that unhappy condition, seldom has anything worth taking, while the other opens his stores to you as freely as he does his heart. But who are these setting forth on the highway at this late hour?"

"Fellows that pretend to wealth, by affecting to conceal it. I'll warrant you, now, Roderique, that there is not money enough among all those varlets to pay the laquais that shall serve them their boiled eggs to-night."

"By St. Iago, my blessed patron!" whispered one of the leaders of a small cavalcade, who, with a single companion, rode a little in advance of the others, as if not particularly anxious to be too familiar with the rest, and laughing lightly as he spoke, "yonder vagabond is nearer the truth than is comfortable! We may have sufficient among us all to pay for an olla-podrida and its service, but I much doubt whether there will be a dobla left when the journey shall be once ended."

A low but grave rebuke checked this inconsiderate mirth; and the party, which consisted of merchants, or traders, mounted on mules, as was evident by their appearance, for in that age the different classes were easily recognized by their attire, halted at the gate. The permission to quit the town was regular, and the drowsy and consequently surly gate-

keeper slowly undid his bars, in order that the travellers might pass.

While these necessary movements were going on, the two soldiers stood a little on one side, coolly scanning the group, though Spanish gravity prevented them from indulging openly in an expression of the scorn that they actually felt for two or three Jews who were among the traders. The merchants, moreover, were of a better class, as was evident by a follower or two, who rode in their train, in the garbs of menials, and who kept at a respectful distance while their masters paid the light fee that it was customary to give on passing the gates after night-fall. One of these menials, capitally mounted on a tall spirited mule, happened to place himself so near Diego, during this little ceremony, that the latter, who was talkative by nature, could not refrain from having his say.

"Prithee, Pepe," commenced the soldier, "how many hundred doblas a year do they pay in that service of thine, and how often do they renew that fine leathern doublet?"

The varlet, or follower of the merchant, who was still a youth, though his vigorous frame and embrowned cheek denoted equally severe exercise and rude exposure, started and reddened at this free inquiry, which was enforced by a hand slapped familiarly on his knee, and such a squeeze of the leg as denoted the freedom of the camp. The laugh of Diego probably suppressed a sudden outbreak of anger, for the soldier was one whose manner indicated too much good-humour easily to excite resentment.

"Thy gripe is friendly, but somewhat close, comrade," the young domestic mildly observed; "and if thou wilt take a friend's counsel, it will be, never to indulge in too great familiarity, lest some day it lead to a broken pate."

"By holy San Pedro! I should relish"—

It was too late, however; for, his masters having proceeded, the youth pushed a powerful rowel into the flank of his mule, and the vigorous animal dashed ahead, nearly upsetting Diego, who was pressing hard on the pommel of the saddle, by the movement.

"There is mettle in that boy," exclaimed the good-natured soldier, as he recovered his feet. "I thought, for one moment, he was about to favour me with a visitation of his hand."

"Thou art wrong, and too much accustomed to be heedless, Diego," answered his comrade; "and it had been no wonder had that youth struck thee to the earth for the indignity thou put'st upon him."

"Ha! a hireling follower of some cringing Hebrew! He dare to strike a blow at a soldier of the King!"

"He may have been a soldier of the King himself, in his day. These are times when most of his frame and muscle are called on to go in harness. I think I have seen that face before; ay, and that, too, where none of craven hearts would be apt to go."

"The fellow is a mere varlet, and a younker that has just escaped from the hands of the women."

"I'll answer for it, that he hath faced both the Catalan and the Moor in his time, young

as he may seem. Thou knowest that the nobles are wont to carry their sons, as children, early into the fight, that they may learn the deeds of chivalry betimes."

"The nobles!" repeated Diego, laughing. "In the name of all the devils, Roderique, of what art thou thinking, that thou likenest this knave to a young noble?" Dost fancy him a Guzman, or a Mendoza, in disguise, that thou speakest thus of chivalry?"

"True—it doth, indeed, seem silly; and yet have I before met that frown in battle, and heard that sharp quick voice in a rally. By St. Iago de Compostello, I have it! Hark'e, Diego!—a word in thy ear."

The veteran now led his more youthful comrade aside, although there was no one near to listen to what he said; and looking carefully round, to make certain that his words would not be overheard, he whispered for a moment in Diego's ear.

"Holy Mother of God!" exclaimed the latter, recoiling quite three paces, in surprise and awe. "Thou canst not be right, Roderique!"

"I will place my soul's welfare on it," returned the other, positively. "Have I not often seen him with his visor up, and followed him, time and again, to the charge?"

"And he setting forth as a trader's varlet! —Nay, I know not, but as the servitor of a Jew!"

"Our business, Diego, is to strike without looking into the quarrel; to look without seeing, and to listen without hearing. Although his coffers are low, Don John is a good master, and our anointed king; and so we will prove ourselves discreet soldiers."

"But he will never forgive me that gripe of the knee, and my foolish tongue. I shall never dare meet him again."

"Humph!—It is not probable thou ever wilt meet him at the table of the King; and, as for the field, as he is wont to go first, there will not be much temptation for him to turn back in order to look at thee."

"Thou thinkest, then, he will not be apt to know me again?"

"If it should prove so, boy, thou needst

not take it in ill part; as such as he have more demands on their memories than they can always meet."

"The blessed Maria make thee a true prophet! else would I never dare again to appear in the ranks. Were it a favour I had conferred, I might hope it would be forgotten; but an indignity sticks long in the memory."

Here the two soldiers moved away, continuing the discourse from time to time, although the elder frequently admonished his loquacious companion of the virtue of discretion.

In the mean time, the travellers pursued their way, with a diligence that denoted great distrust of the roads, and as great a desire to get on. They journeyed throughout the night, nor did there occur any relaxation in their speed until the return of the sun exposed them again to the observations of the curious, among whom were thought to be many emissaries of Henry of Castile, whose agents were known to be particularly on the alert along all the roads that communicated between the capital of Aragon and Valladolid, the city

in which his royal sister had then, quite recently, taken refuge. Nothing remarkable occurred, however, to distinguish this journey from any other of the period. There was nothing about the appearance of the travellers, who soon entered the territory of Soria, a province of Old Castile, where armed parties of the monarch were active in watching the passes, to attract the attention of Henry's soldiers; and, as for the more vulgar robber, he was temporarily driven from the highways by the presence of those who acted in the name of the prince. As respects the youth who had given rise to the discourse between the two soldiers, he rode diligently in the rear of his master, so long as it pleased the latter to remain in the saddle; and, during the few and brief pauses that occurred in the travelling, he busied himself, like the other menials, in the duties of his proper vocation. On the evening of the second day, however, about an hour after the party had left a hostelrie, where it had solaced itself with an olla-podrida and some sour wine, the merry young man who has already been men-

tioned, and who still kept his place by the side of his graver and more aged companion in the van, suddenly burst into a fit of loud laughter, and, reining in his mule, he allowed the whole train to pass him, until he found himself by the side of the young menial already so particularly named. The latter cast a severe and rebuking glance at his reputed master, as he dropped in by his side; and said, with a sternness that ill comported with their apparent relations to each other—

"How now, Master Nuñez! what hath called thee from thy position in the van, to this unseemly familiarity with the varlets in the rear?"

"I crave ten thousand pardons, honest Juan," returned the master, still laughing, though he evidently struggled to repress his mirth, out of respect to the other; "but here is a calamity befallen us, that outdoes those of the fables and legends of necromancy and knight-errantry. The worthy Master Ferreras, yonder, who is so skilful in handling gold, having passed his whole life in buying and

selling barley and oats, hath actually mislaid the purse, which it would seem he hath forgotten at the inn we have quitted, in payment of some very stale bread and rancid oil. I doubt if there are twenty reals left in the whole party!"

"And is it a matter of jest, Master Nuñez," returned the servant, though a slight smile struggled about his mouth, as if ready to join in his companion's merriment, "that we are penniless? Thank Heaven! the Burgo of Osma cannot be very distant, and we may have less occasion for gold. And now, master of mine, let me command thee to keep thy proper place in this cavalcade, and not to forget thyself by such undue familiarity with thy inferiors. I have no farther need of thee, and therefore hasten back to Master Ferreras and acquaint him with my sympathy and grief."

The young man smiled, though the eye of the pretended servant was averted, as if he cared to respect his own admonitions; while the other evidently sought a look of recognition

and favour. In another minute the usual order of the journey was resumed.

As the night advanced, and the hour arrived when man and beast usually betray fatigue, these travellers pushed their mules the hardest; and about midnight, by dint of hard pricking, they came under the principal gate of a small walled town, called Osma, that stood not far from the boundary of the province of Burgos, though still in that of Soria. No sooner was his mule near enough to the gate to allow of the freedom, than the young merchant in advance dealt sundry blows on it with his staff, effectually apprising those within of his presence. It required no strong pull of the reins to stop the mules of those behind; but the pretended varlet now pushed ahead, and was about to assume his place among the principal personages near the gate, when a heavy stone, hurled from the battlements, passed so close to his head as vividly to remind him how near he might be to making a hasty journey to another world. A cry arose in the whole party at this narrow escape; nor were loud imprecations on

the hand that had cast the missile spared. The youth himself seemed the least disturbed of them all; and though his voice was sharp and authoritative, as he raised it in remonstrance, it was neither angry nor alarmed.

"How now!" he said; "is this the way you treat peaceful travellers; merchants, who come to ask hospitality and a night's repose at your hands?"

"Merchants and travellers!" growled a voice from above; "say, rather, spies and agents of King Henry. Who are ye? Speak promptly, or ye may expect something sharper than stones at the next visit."

"Tell me," answered the youth, as if disdaining to be questioned himself, "who holds this borough? Is it not the noble count of Treviño?"

"The very same, Señor," answered he above, with a mollified tone: "but what can a set of travelling traders know of his Excellency? and who art thou, that speakest up as sharply and as proudly as if thou wert a grandee?"

"I am Ferdinand of Trastamara — the

Prince of Aragon — the King of Sicily. Go! bid thy master hasten to the gate."

This sudden announcement, which was made in the lofty manner of one accustomed to implicit obedience, produced a marked change in the state of affairs. The party at the gate so far altered their several positions, that the two superior nobles, who had ridden in front, gave place to the youthful King; while the group of knights made such arrangements as showed that disguise was dropped, and each man was now expected to appear in his proper character. It might have amused a close and philosophical observer to note the promptitude with which the young cavaliers, in particular, rose in their saddles, as if casting aside the lounging mien of grovelling traders, in order to appear what they really were, men accustomed to the tourney and the field. On the ramparts the change was equally sudden and great. All appearance of drowsiness vanished; the soldiers spoke to each other in suppressed but hurried voices; and the distant tramp of feet announced that messengers were despatched in various direc-

tions. Some ten minutes elapsed in this manner, during which an inferior officer showed himself on the ramparts, and apologized for a delay that arose altogether from the force of discipline, and on no account from any want of respect. At length a bustle on the wall, with the light of many lanterns, betrayed the approach of the governor of the town; and the impatience of the young men below, that had begun to manifest itself in half-uttered execrations, was put under a more decent restraint for the occasion.

"Are the joyful tidings that my people bring me true?" cried one from the battlements; while a lantern was lowered from the wall, as if to make a closer inspection of the party at the gate: "Am I really so honoured, as to receive a summons from Don Ferdinand of Aragon, at this unusual hour?"

"Cause thy fellow to turn his lantern more closely on my countenance," answered the King, "that thou may'st make thyself sure. I will cheerfully overlook the disrespect, Count of

Treviño, for the advantage of a more speedy admission."

"'Tis he!" exclaimed the noble: "I know those royal features which bear the lineaments of a long race of kings; and that voice have I heard, often, rallying the squadrons of Aragon, in their onsets against the Moors. Let the trumpets speak up, and proclaim this happy arrival; and open wide our gates, without delay."

This order was promptly obeyed, and the youthful king entered Osma, by sound of trumpet, encircled by a strong party of men-at-arms, and with half of the awakened and astonished population at his heels.

"It is lucky, my Lord King," said Don Andres de Cabrera, the young noble already mentioned, as he rode familiarly at the side of Don Ferdinand, "that we have found these good lodgings without cost; it being a melancholy truth, that Master Ferreras hath, negligently enough, mislaid the only purse there was among us. In such a strait, it would not have been easy to keep up the character of

thrifty traders much longer; for, while the knaves higgle at the price of everything, they are fond of letting their gold be seen."

"Now that we are in thine own Castile, Don Andres," returned the King, smiling, "we shall throw ourselves gladly on thy hospitality, well knowing that thou hast two most beautiful diamonds always at thy command."

"I, Sir King! Your Highness is pleased to be merry at *my* expense, although I believe it is, just now, the only gratification I can pay for. My attachment for the Princess Isabella hath driven me from my lands; and even the humblest cavalier in the Aragonese army is not, just now, poorer than I. What diamonds, therefore, can I command?"

"Report speaketh favourably of the two brilliants that are set in the face of the Doña Beatriz de Bobadilla; and I hear they are altogether at thy disposal; or, as much so, as a noble maiden's inclinations can leave them with a loyal knight."

"Ah! my Lord King! if this adventure end as happily as it commenceth, I may,

indeed, look to your royal favour for some aid in that matter."

The King, smiled in his own sedate manner; but the Count de Treviño pressing nearer to his side, at that moment, the discourse was changed. That night Ferdinand of Aragon slept soundly; but with the dawn, he and his followers were again in the saddle. The party quitted Osma, however, in a manner very different from that in which it had approached its gate. Ferdinand now appeared as a knight, mounted on a noble Andalusian charger; and all his followers had still more openly assumed their proper characters. A strong body of lancers, led by the Count of Treviño in person, composed the escort; and on the 9th of the month, the whole cavalcade reached Dueñas, in Leon, a place quite near to Valladolid. The disaffected nobles crowded about the Prince to pay their court, and he was received as became his high rank and still higher destinies.

Here the more luxurious Castilians had an opportunity of observing the severe personal

discipline by which Don Ferdinand, at the immature years of eighteen, for he was scarcely older, had succeeded in hardening his body, and in stringing his nerves, so as to be equal to any deeds in arms. His delight was found in the rudest military exercises; and no knight of Aragon could better direct his steed in the tourney, or in the field. Like most of the royal races of that period, and indeed of this, in despite of the burning sun under which he dwelt, his native complexion was brilliant, though it had already become embrowned by exposure in the chase, and in the martial occupations of his boyhood. Temperate as a Mussulman, his active and well-proportioned frame seemed to be early indurating, as if Providence held him in reserve, for some of its own dispensations that called for great bodily vigour, as well as for deep forethought and a vigilant sagacity. During the four or five days that followed, the noble Castilians who listened to his discourse, knew not of which most to approve, his fluent eloquence, or a wariness of thought and expression, which,

while they might have been deemed prematurely worldly and cold-blooded, were believed to be particular merits in one destined to control the jarring passions, deep deceptions, and selfish devices of men.

CHAPTER II.

Leave to the nightingale her shady wood;
A privacy of glorious light is thine;
Whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood
Of harmony, with rapture more divine;
Type of the wise, who soar, but never roam,
True to the kindred points of Heaven and home.

WORDSWORTH.

WHILE John of Aragon had recourse to such means to enable his son to escape the vigilant and vindictive emissaries of the King of Castile, there were anxious hearts in Valladolid, awaiting the result with the impatience and doubt that ever attend the execution of hazardous enterprises. Among others who felt this deep interest in the movements of Ferdinand of Aragon and his companions, were a few, whom it has now become necessary to introduce to the reader.

Although Valladolid had not then reached the magnificence it subsequently acquired as the capital of Charles V, it was an ancient, and, for the age, a magnificent and luxurious town, possessing its palaces, as well as its more inferior abodes. To the principal of the former, the residence of John de Vivero, a distinguished noble of the kingdom, we must repair in imagination; where companions more agreeable than those we have just quitted, await us, and who were then themselves awaiting, with deep anxiety, the arrival of a messenger with tidings from Dueña. The particular apartment that it will be necessary to imagine, had much of the rude splendour of the period, united to that air of comfort and fitness that woman seldom fails to impart to the portion of any edifice that comes directly under her control. In the year 1469, Spain was fast approaching the termination of that great struggle which had already endured seven centuries, and in which the Christian and the Mussulman contended for the mastery of the peninsula. The latter had long held

sway in the southern parts of Leon, and had left behind him, in the palaces of this town, some of the traces of his barbaric magnificence. The lofty and fretted ceilings were not as glorious as those to be found further south, it is true; still the Moor had been here, and the name of Veled Vlid, since changed to Valladolid, denotes its Arabic connection. In the room just mentioned, and in the principal palace of this ancient town, that of John de Vivero, were two females, in earnest and engrossing discourse. Both were young, and, though in very different styles, both would have been deemed beautiful in any age or region of the earth. One, indeed, was surpassingly lovely. She had just reached her nineteenth year, an age when the female form has received its full developement in that generous climate; and the most imaginative poet of Spain, a country so renowned for beauty of form in the sex, could not have conceived a person more symmetrical. The hands, feet, bust, and all the outlines, were those of feminine loveliness; while the stature, with-

out rising to a height to suggest the idea of anything masculine, was sufficient to ennoble an air of quiet dignity. The beholder, at first, was a little at a loss to know whether the influence to which he submitted, proceeded most from the perfection of the body itself, or from the expression that the soul within imparted to the almost faultless exterior. The face was, in all respects, worthy of the form. Although born beneath the sun of Spain, her lineage carried her back, through a long line of kings, to the Gothic sovereigns; and its frequent intermarriages with foreign princesses, had produced in her countenance, that intermixture of the brilliancy of the north, with the witchery of the south, that probably is nearest to the perfection of feminine loveliness.

Her complexion was fair, and her rich locks had that tint of the auburn which approaches as near as possible to the more marked colour that gives it warmth, without attaining any of the latter's distinctive hue. "Her mild blue eyes," says an eminent historian, "beamed

with intelligence and sensibility." In these indexes to the soul, indeed, were to be found her highest claims to loveliness, for they bespoke no less the beauty within, than the beauty without; imparting to features of exquisite delicacy and symmetry, a serene expression of dignity and moral excellence, that was remarkably softened by a modesty that seemed as much allied to the sensibilities of a woman, as to the purity of an angel. To add to all these charms, though of royal blood, and educated in a court, an earnest but meek sincerity presided over every look and thought, as thought was betrayed in the countenance, adding the illumination of truth to the lustre of youth and beauty.

The attire of this princess was simple,—for happily the taste of the age enabled those who worked for the toilet to consult the proportions of nature,—though the materials were rich, and such as became her high rank. A single cross of diamonds sparkled on a neck of snow, to which it was attached by a short string of pearls; and a few rings, decked with

stones of price, rather cumbered than adorned hands that needed no ornaments to rivet the gaze. Such was Isabella of Castile, in her days of maiden retirement and maiden pride —while waiting the issue of those changes that were about to put their seal on her own future fortunes, as well as on those of posterity even to our own times.

Her companion was Beatriz de Bobadilla, the friend of her childhood and infancy, and who continued, to the last, the friend of her prime, and of her death-bed. This lady, a little older than the princess, was of more decided Spanish mien; for, though of an ancient and illustrious house, policy and necessity had not caused so many foreign intermarriages in her race, as had been required in that of her royal mistress. Her eyes were black and sparkling, bespeaking a generous soul, and a resolution so high that some commentators have termed it valour; while her hair was dark as the raven's wing. Like that of her royal mistress, her form exhibited the grace and loveliness of young womanhood, developed by the generous warmth of

Spain; though her stature was, in a slight degree, less noble, and the outlines of her figure, in about an equal proportion, less perfect. In short, nature had drawn some such distinction between the exceeding grace and high moral charms that encircled the beauty of the princess, and those which belonged to her noble friend, as the notions of men had established between their respective conditions; though, considered singly, as women, either would have been deemed pre-eminently winning and attractive.

At the moment we have selected for the opening of the scene that is to follow, Isabella, fresh from the morning toilet, was seated in a chair, leaning lightly on one of its arms, in an attitude that interest in the subject she was discussing, and confidence in her companion, had naturally produced; while Beatriz de Bobadilla occupied a low stool at her feet, bending her body in respectful affection so far forward as to allow the fairer hair of the princess to mingle with her own dark curls, while the face of the latter appeared to repose on the

head of her friend. As no one else was present, the reader will at once infer, from the entire absence of Castilian etiquette and Spanish reserve, that the dialogue they held was strictly confidential, and that it was governed more by the feelings of nature than by the artificial rules that usually regulate the intercourse of courts.

"I have prayed, Beatriz, that God would direct my judgment in this weighty concern," said the princess, in continuation of some previous observation; and I hope I have as much kept in view the happiness of my future subjects, in the choice I have made, as my own."

"None shall presume to question it," said Beatriz de Bobadilla; "for had it pleased you to wed the Grand Turk, the Castilians would not gainsay your wish, such is their love!"

"Say, rather, such is thy love for me, my good Beatriz, that thou fanciest this," returned Isabella, smiling, and raising her face from the other's head: "our Castilians might overlook such a sin, but I could not pardon myself for forgetting that I am a Christian. Beatriz, I have been sorely tried in this matter!"

"But the hour of trial is nearly passed. Holy Maria! what lightness of reflection, and vanity, and misjudging of self, must exist in man, to embolden some who have dared to aspire to become your husband! You were yet a child when they betrothed you to Don Carlos, a prince old enough to be your father; and, then, as if that were not sufficient to warm Castilian blood, they chose the King of Portugal for you, and he might well have passed for a generation still more remote! Much as I love you, Doña Isabella, and my own soul is scarce dearer to me than your person and mind, for nought do I respect you more than for the noble and princely resolution, child as you then were, with which you denied the King, in his wicked wish to make you Queen of Portugal."

"Don Enriquez is my brother, Beatriz; and thine and my royal master."

"Ah! bravely did you tell them all," continued Beatriz de Bobadilla, with sparkling eyes, and a feeling of exultation that caused her to overlook the quiet rebuke of her mis-

tress; "and worthy was it of a princess of the royal house of Castile! 'The Infantas of Castile,' you said, 'could not be disposed of in marriage without the consent of the nobles of the realm;' and with that fit reply they were glad to be content."

"And yet, Beatriz, am I about to dispose of an Infanta of Castile, without even consulting its nobles."

"Say not that, my excellent mistress. There is not a loyal and gallant cavalier between the Pyrenees and the sea, who will not, in his heart, approve of your choice. The character, and age, and other qualities of the suitor, make a sensible difference in these concerns. But unfit as Don Alfonso of Portugal was, and is, to be the wedded husband of Doña Isabella of Castile, what shall we say to the next suitor who appeared as a pretender to your royal hand—Don Pedro Giron, the Master of Calatrava? truly a most worthy lord for a maiden of the royal house! Out upon him! A Pacheco might think himself full honourably mated, could he have found a damsel of Bobadilla to elevate his race!"

"That ill-assorted union was imposed upon my brother by unworthy favourites; and God, in his holy providence, saw fit to defeat their wishes, by hurrying their intended bridegroom to an unexpected grave!"

"Ay! had it not pleased his blessed will so to dispose of Don Pedro, other means would not have been wanting!"

"This little hand of thine, Beatriz," returned the princess, gravely, though she smiled affectionately on her friend as she took the hand in question, "was not made for the deed its owner menaced."

"That which its owner menaced," replied Beatriz, with eyes flashing fire, "this hand would have executed, before Isabella of Castile should be the doomed bride of the Grand Master of Calatrava. What! was the purest, loveliest virgin of Castile, and she of royal birth—nay, the rightful heiress of the crown—to be sacrificed to a lawless libertine, because it had pleased Don Enriquez to forget his station and duties, and make a favourite of a craven miscreant!"

"Thou always forgettest, Beatriz, that Don Enriquez is our lord the King, and my royal brother."

"I do not forget, Señora, that you are the royal sister of our lord the King, and that Pedro de Giron, or Pachecho, whichever it might suit the ancient Portuguese page to style him, was altogether unworthy to sit in your presence, much less to become your wedded husband. Oh! what days of anguish were those, my gracious lady, when your knees ached with bending in prayer that this might not be! But God would not permit it—neither would I! That dagger should have pierced his heart, before ear of his should have heard the vows of Isabella of Castile!"

"Speak no more of this, good Beatriz, I pray thee," said the princess, shuddering, and crossing herself: "they were, in sooth, days of anguish; but what were they in comparison with the passion of the Son of God, who gave himself a sacrifice for our sins! Name it not, then; it was good for my soul to be thus tried; and thou knowest that the evil was turned

from me—more, I doubt not, by the efficacy of our prayers than by that of thy dagger. If thou wilt speak of my suitors, surely there are others better worthy of the trouble."

A light gleamed about the dark eye of Beatriz, and a smile struggled towards her pretty mouth; for well did she understand that the royal, but bashful maiden, would gladly hear something of him on whom her choice had finally fallen. Although ever disposed to do that which was grateful to her mistress, with a woman's coquetry, Beatriz determined to approach the more pleasing part of the subject coyly, and by a regular gradation of events, in the order in which they had actually occurred.

"Then, there was Monsieur de Guienne, the brother of King Louis of France," she resumed, affecting contempt in her manner; "*he* would fain become the husband of the future Queen of Castile! But even our most unworthy Castilians soon saw the unfitness of that union. Their pride was unwilling to run the chance of becoming a fief of France."

"That misfortune could never have befallen our beloved Castile," interrupted Isabella with dignity: "had I espoused the King of France himself, he would have learned to respect me as the Queen Proprietor of this ancient realm, and not have looked upon me as a subject."

"Then, Señora," continued Beatriz, looking up into Isabella's face, and laughing—"there was your own royal kinsman, Don Ricardo of Gloucester; he that they say was born with teeth, and who carries already a burthen so heavy on his back, that he may well thank his patron saint that he is not also to be loaded with the affairs of Castile." *

"Thy tongue runneth riot, Beatriz. They tell me that Don Ricardo is a noble and aspiring prince, and that he is, one day, likely to wed some princess, whose merit may well console him for his failure in Castile. But what more hast thou to offer concerning my suitors?"

* Note.—The authorities differ as to which of the English princes was the suitor of Isabella; Edward IV. himself, Clarence, or Richard. Isabella was the granddaughter of Catherine of Lancaster, who was a daughter of John of Gaunt.

"Nay, what more can I say, my beloved mistress? We have now reached Don Fernando, literally the first, as he proveth to be the last, and, as we know him to be, the best of them all."

"I think I have been guided by the motives that become my birth and future hopes, in choosing Don Ferdinand;" said Isabella, meekly, though she was uneasy in spite of her royal views of matrimony;—"since nothing can so much tend to the peace of our dear kingdom, and to the success of the great cause of Christianity, as to unite Castile and Aragon under one crown."

"By uniting their sovereigns in holy wedlock," returned Beatriz, with respectful gravity, though a smile again struggled around her pouting lips. "What if Don Fernando is the most youthful, the handsomest, the most valiant and the most agreeable prince in Christendom, it is no fault of yours, since you did not make him, but have only accepted him for a husband!"

"Nay, this exceedeth discretion and respect,

my good Beatriz," returned Isabella, affecting to frown, even while she blushed deeply at her own emotions, and looked gratified at the praises of her betrothed. "Thou knowest that I have never beheld my cousin, the King of Sicily."

"Very true, Señora; but Father Alonso de Coca hath — and a surer eye, or truer tongue than his, do not exist in Castile."

"Beatriz, I pardon thy license, however unjust and unseemly, because I know thou lovest me, and lookest rather at mine own happiness, than at that of my people," said the princess, the effect of whose gravity now was not diminished by any betrayal of natural feminine weakness — for she felt slightly offended. "Thou knowest, or ought'st to know, that a maiden of royal birth is bound principally to consult the interests of the state, in bestowing her hand, and that the idle fancies of village girls have little in common with her duties. Nay, what virgin of noble extraction like thyself, even, would dream of aught else than of submitting to the counsel of her family, in

taking a husband? If I have selected Don Fernando of Aragon, from among many princes, it is doubtless because the alliance is more suited to the interests of Castile, than any other that hath offered. Thou seest, Beatriz, that the Castilians and the Aragonese spring from the same source, and have the same habits and prejudices. They speak the same language"—

"Nay, dearest lady, do not confound the pure Castilian with the dialect of the mountains!"

"Well, have thy fling, wayward one, if thou wilt; but we can easier teach the nobles of Aragon our purer Spanish, than we can teach it to the Gaul. Then, Don Fernando is of my own race; the house of Trastamara cometh of Castile and her monarchs, and we may at least hope that the King of Sicily will be able to make himself understood."

"If he could not, he were no true knight! The man whose tongue should fail him, when the stake was a royal maiden of a beauty surpassing that of the dawn—of an excellence that already touches on heaven—of a crown"—

"Girl — girl — thy tongue is getting the mastery of thee — such discourse ill befitteth thee and me."

"And yet, Doña Ysabel, my tongue is close bound to my heart."

"I do believe thee, my good Beatriz; but we should bethink us both, of our last shrivings, and of the ghostly counsel that we then received. Such flattering discourse seemeth light, when we remember our manifold transgressions, and our many occasions for forgiveness. As for this marriage, I would have thee think that it has been contracted, on my part, with the considerations and motives of a princess, and not through any light indulgence of my fancies. Thou knowest that I have never beheld Don Fernando, and that he hath never even looked upon me."

"Assuredly, dearest lady and honoured mistress, all this I know, and see, and believe; and I also agree that it were unseemly, and little befitting her birth, for even a noble maiden to contract the all-important obligations of marriage, with no better motive than the light

impulses of a country wench. Nothing is more just than that we are alike bound to consult our own dignity, and the wishes of kinsmen and friends; and that our duty, and the habits of piety and submission in which we have been reared, are better pledges for our connubial affection, than any caprices of a girlish imagination. Still, my honoured lady, it is most fortunate that your high obligations point to one as youthful, brave, noble and chivalrous, as is the King of Sicily, as we well know, by Father Alonso's representations, to be the fact; and that all my friends unite in saying that Don Andres de Cabrera, madcap and silly as he is, will make an exceedingly excellent husband for Beatriz de Bobadilla!"

Isabella, habitually dignified and reserved as she was, had her confidants and her moments for unbending; and Beatriz was the principal among the former, while the present instant was one of the latter. She smiled, therefore, at this sally; and parting, with her own fair hand, the dark locks on the brow of her friend, she regarded her much as the mother regards

her child, when sudden passages of tenderness come over the heart.

"If madcap should wed madcap, *thy* friends, at least, have judged rightly," answered the princess. Then pausing an instant, as if i deep thought, she continued, in a graver manner, though modesty shone in her tell-tale complexion, and the sensibility that beamed in her eyes betrayed that she now felt more as a woman, than as a future queen bent only on the happiness of her people: "As this interview draweth near, I suffer an embarrassment I had not thought it easy to inflict on an Infanta of Castile. To thee, my faithful Beatriz, I will acknowledge, that were the King of Sicily as old as Don Alfonso of Portugal, or were he as effeminate and unmanly as Monsieur of Guienne; were he, in sooth, less engaging and young, I should feel less embarrassment in meeting him, than I now experience."

"This is passing strange, Señora! Now, I will confess that I would not willingly abate in Don Andres one hour of his life, which has been sufficiently long as it is; one grace of his

person, if indeed the honest cavalier hath any to boast of; or one single perfection of either body or mind."

"Thy case is not mine, Beatriz. Thou knowest the Marquis of Moya; hast listened to his discourse, and art accustomed to his praises, and his admiration!"

"Holy St. Iago of Spain! Do not distrust anything, Señora, on account of unfamiliarity with such matters — for, of all learning, it is easiest to learn to relish praise and admiration!"

"True, daughter — (for so Isabella often termed her friend, though her junior: in later life, and after the princess had become a queen, this, indeed, was her usual term of endearment) — "true, daughter, when praise and admiration are freely given and fairly merited. But I distrust, myself, my claims to be thus viewed, and the feelings with which Don Fernando may first behold me. I know — nay, I *feel* him to be graceful, and noble, and valiant, and generous, and good; comely to the eye, and strict of duty to our holy religion; as illustrious in qualities, as in birth; and I trem-

ble to think of my own unsuitableness to be his bride and queen."

"God's Justice! — I should like to meet the impudent Aragonese noble, that would dare to hint as much as this! If Don Fernando is noble, are you not nobler, Señora, as coming of the senior branch of the same house; if he is young, are you not equally so; if he is wise, are you not wiser; if he is comely, are you not more of an angel than a woman; if he is valiant, are you not virtuous; if he is graceful, are you not grace itself; if he is generous, are you not good, and, what is more, are you not the very soul of generosity; if he is strict of duty in matters of our holy religion, are you not an angel?"

"Good sooth — good sooth — Beatriz, thou art a comforter! I could reprove thee for this idle tongue, but I know thee honest."

"This is no more than that deep modesty, honoured mistress, which ever maketh you quicker to see the merits of others, than to perceive your own. Let Don Fernando look to it! Though he come in all the pomp and glory of his many crowns, I warrant you will

find him a royal maiden in Castile, who shall abash him and rebuke his vanity, even while she appears before him in the sweet guise of her own meek nature!"

"I have said nought of Don Fernando's vanity, Beatriz—nor do I esteem him in the least inclined to so weak a feeling; and as for pomp, we well know that gold no more abounds at Zaragosa than at Valladolid, albeir he hath many crowns in possession and in reserve. Notwithstanding all thy foolish but friendly tongue hath uttered, I distrust myself, and not the King of Sicily. Methinks I could meet any other prince in Christendom with indifference—or, at least, as becometh my rank and sex; but I confess I tremble at the thought of encountering the eyes and opinions of my noble cousin."

Beatriz listened with interest; and when her royal mistress ceased speaking, she kissed her hand affectionately, and then pressed it to her heart.

"Let Don Fernando tremble, rather, Señora, at encountering yours," she answered.

"Nay, Beatriz, we know that he hath no-

thing to dread, for report speaketh but too favourably of him. But, why linger here in doubt and apprehension, when the staff on which it is my duty to lean is ready to receive its burthen: Father Alonso doubtless waiteth for us, and we will now join him."

The princess and her friend now repaired to the chapel of the palace, where her confessor celebrated the daily mass. The self-distrust which disturbed the feelings of the modest Isabella was appeased by the holy rites, or rather it took refuge on that Rock where she was accustomed to place all her troubles, with her sins. As the little assemblagé left the chapel, one, hot with haste, arrived with the expected, but still doubted tidings, that the King of Sicily had reached Dueñas in safety, and that, as he was now in the very centre of his supporters, there could no longer be any reasonable distrust of the speedy celebration of the contemplated marriage.

Isabella was much overcome with this news, and required more than usual of the care of Beatriz de Bobadilla, to restore her to that

sweet serenity of mind and air, which ordinarily rendered her presence as attractive as it was commanding. An hour or two spent in meditation and prayer, however, finally produced a gentle calm in her feelings, and these two friends were again alone, in the very apartment where we first introduced them to the reader.

"Hast thou seen Don Andres de Cabrera?" demanded the princess, taking a hand from a brow which had been often pressed in a sort of bewildered recollection.

Beatriz de Bobadilla blushed — and then she laughed outright, with a freedom that the long-established affection of her mistress did not rebuke.

"For a youth of thirty, and a cavalier well hacked in the wars of the Moors, Don Andres hath a nimble foot," she answered. "He brought hither the tidings of the arrival; and with it he brought his own delightful person, to show it was no lie. For one so experienced, he hath a strong propensity to talk; and so, in sooth, whilst you, my honoured mistress would

be in your closet alone, I could but listen to all the marvels of the journey. It seems, Señora, that they did not reach Dueñas any too soon; for the only purse among them was mislaid, or blown away by the wind on account of its lightness."

"I trust this accident hath been repaired. Few of the house of Trāstamara have much gold at this trying moment, and yet none are wont to be entirely without it."

"Don Andres is neither beggar nor miser. He is now in our Castile, where I doubt not he is familiar with the Jews and money-lenders; as these last must know the full value of his lands, the King of Sicily will not want. I hear, too, that the Count of Treviño hath conducted nobly with him."

"It shall be well for the Count of Treviño that he hath had this liberality. But, Beatriz, bring forth the writing materials; it is meet that I, at once, acquaint Don Enriquez with this event, and with my purpose of marriage."

"Nay, dearest mistress, this is out of all rule. When a maiden, gentle or simple, in-

tendeth marriage against her kinsmen's wishes, it is the way to wed first, and to write the letter and ask the blessing when the evil is done."

"Go to, light-of-speech! Thou hast spoken; now bring the pens and paper. The King is not only my lord and sovereign, but he is my nearest of kin, and should be my father."

"And Doña Joanna of Portugal, his royal consort, and our illustrious queen, should be your mother; and a fitting guide would she be to any modest virgin! No — No — my beloved mistress; your royal mother was the Doña Isabella of Portugal — and a very different princess was she from this, her wanton niece."

"Thou givest thyself too much license, Doña Beatriz, and forgettest my request. I desire to write to my brother the King."

It was so seldom that Isabella spoke sternly, that her friend started, and the tears rushed to her eyes at this rebuke; but she procured the writing materials before she presumed to look into Isabella's face, in order to ascertain if she

were really angered. There all was beautiful serenity again; and the Lady of Bobadilla, perceiving that her mistress's mind was altogether occupied with the matter before her, and that she had already forgotten her displeasure, chose to make no further allusion to the subject.

Isabella now wrote her celebrated letter, in which she appeared to forget all her natural timidity, and to speak solely as a princess. By the treaty of Toros de Guisando, in which, setting aside the claims of Joanna of Portugal's daughter, she had been recognized as the heiress of the throne, it had been stipulated that she should not marry without the King's consent; and she now apologized for the step she was about to take, on the substantial plea that her enemies had disregarded the solemn compact entered into not to urge her into any union that was unsuitable or disagreeable to herself. She then alluded to the political advantages that would follow the union of the crowns of Castile and Aragon, and solicited the King's approbation of the step she was about to

take. This letter, after having been submitted to John de Vivero, and others of her council, was despatched by a special messenger — after which act the arrangements necessary as preliminaries to a meeting between the betrothed were entered into. Castilian etiquette was proverbial, even in that age; and the discussion led to a proposal that Isabella rejected with her usual modesty and discretion.

"It seemeth to me," said John de Vivero, "that this alliance should not take place without some admission, on the part of Don Fernando, of the inferiority of Aragon to our own Castile. The House of the latter kingdom is but a junior branch of the reigning House of Castile, and the former territory of old was admitted to have a dependency on the latter."

This proposition was much applauded, until the beautiful and natural sentiments of the princess herself interposed to expose its weakness and its deformities.

"It is doubtless true," she said, "that Don Juan of Aragon is the son of the younger

brother of my royal grandfather; but he is none the less a king. Nay, besides his crown of Aragon, a country, if thou wilt, which is inferior to Castile, he hath those of Naples and Sicily; not to speak of Navarre, over which he ruleth, although it may not be with too much right. Don Fernando even weareth the crown of Sicily, by the renunciation of Don Juan; and shall he, a crowned sovereign, make concessions to one who is barely a princess, and whom it may never please God to conduct to a throne? Moreover, Don John of Vivero, I beseech thee to remember the errand that bringeth the King of Sicily to Valladolid. Both he and I have two parts to perform, and two characters to maintain — those of prince and princess, and those of Christians wedded and bound by holy marriage ties. It would ill become one that is about to take on herself the duties and obligations of a wife, to begin the intercourse with exactions that should be humiliating to the pride and self-respect of her lord. Aragon may truly be an inferior realm to Castile — but Ferdinand of Aragon is even

now every way the equal of Isabella of Castile; and when he shall receive my vows, and, with them, my duty and my affections" — Isabella's colour deepened, and her mild eye lighted with a sort of holy enthusiasm — "as befitteth a woman, though an infidel, he would become, in some particulars, my superior. Let me, then, hear no more of this; for it could not nearly as much pain Don Fernando to make the concessions ye require, as it paineth me to hear of them."

CHAPTER III.

Nice customs' curt'sy to great kings. Dear Kate, you and I cannot be confined within the weak list of a country's fashion. We are the makers of manners; and the liberty that follows our places, stops the mouths of all fault-finders.—*Henry V.*

NOTWITHSTANDING her high resolution, habitual firmness, and a serenity of mind, that seemed to pervade the moral system of Isabella, like a deep, quiet current of enthusiasm, but which it were truer to assign to the high and fixed principles that guided all her actions, her heart beat tumultuously, and her native reserve, which almost amounted to shyness, troubled her sorely, as the hour arrived when she was first to behold the prince she had accepted for a husband. Castilian etiquette, no less than the magnitude of the political interests involved in the intended union,

had drawn out the preliminary negotiations several days; the bridegroom being left, all that time, to curb his impatience to behold the princess, as best he might.

On the evening of the 15th of October, 1469, however, every obstacle being at length removed, Don Fernando threw himself into the saddle, and, accompanied by only four attendants, among whom was Andres de Cabrera, he quietly took his way, without any of the usual accompaniments of his high rank, towards the palace of John of Vivero, in the city of Valladolid. The Archbishop of Toledo was of the faction of the princess, and this prelate, a warlike and active partisan, was in readiness to receive the accepted suitor, and to conduct him to the presence of his mistress.

Isabella, attended only by Beatriz de Bobadilla, was in waiting for the interview, in the apartment already mentioned; and by one of those mighty efforts that even the most retiring of the sex can make, on great occasions, she received her future husband with

quite as much of the dignity of a princess as of the timidity of a woman. Ferdinand of Aragon had been prepared to meet one of singular grace and beauty; but the mixture of angelic modesty with a loveliness that almost surpassed that of her sex, produced a picture approaching so much nearer to heaven than to earth, that, though one of circumspect behaviour, and much accustomed to suppress emotion, he actually started, and his feet were momentarily riveted to the floor, when the glorious vision first met his eye. Then, recovering himself, he advanced eagerly, and taking the little hand which neither met nor repulsed the attempt, he pressed it to his lips with a warmth that seldom accompanies the first interviews of those whose passions are usually so factitious.

"This happy moment hath at length arrived, my illustrious and beautiful cousin!" he said, with a truth of feeling that went directly to the pure and tender heart of Isabella; for no skill in courtly phrases can ever give to the accents of deceit, the point and em-

phasis that belong to sincerity. "I have thought it would never arrive; but this blessed moment—thanks to our own St. Iago, whom I have not ceased to implore with intercessions—more than rewards me for all anxieties."

"I thank my Lord the Prince, and bid him right welcome," modestly returned Isabella. "The difficulties that have been overcome, in order to effect this meeting, are but types of the difficulties we shall have to conquer as we advance through life."

Then followed a few courteous expressions concerning the hopes of the princess that her cousin had wanted for nothing, since his arrival in Castile, with suitable answers; when Don Ferdinand led her to an armed-chair, assuming himself the stool on which Beatriz de Bobadilla was wont to be seated, in her familiar intercourse with her royal mistress. Isabella, however, sensitively alive to the pretensions of the Castilians, who were fond of asserting the superiority of their own country over that of Aragon, would not quietly submit to this arrangement, but declined to be

seated, unless her suitor would take the chair prepared for him also, saying—

"It ill befitteth one who hath little more than some royalty of blood, and her dependence on God, to be thus placed, while the King of Sicily is so unworthily bestowed."

"Let me entreat that it may be so," returned the King. "All considerations of earthly rank vanish in this presence; view me as a knight, ready and desirous of proving his fealty in any court or field of Christendom, and treat me as such."

Isabella, who had that high tact which teaches the precise point where breeding becomes neuter and airs commence, blushed and smiled, but no longer declined to be seated. It was not so much the mere words of her cousin that went to her heart, as the undisguised admiration of his looks, the animation of his eye, and the frank sincerity of his manner. With a woman's instinct she perceived that the impression she had made was favourable, and, with a woman's sensibility, her heart was ready, under the circumstances, to dis-

solve in tenderness at the discovery. This mutual satisfaction soon opened the way to a freer conversation—and, ere half an hour was passed, the archbishop, who, though officially ignorant of the language and wishes of lovers, was practically sufficiently familiar with both, contrived to draw the two or three courtiers who were present, into an adjoining room, where, though the door continued open, he placed them with so much discretion that neither eye nor ear could be any restraint on what was passing. As for Beatriz de Bobadilla, whom female etiquette required should remain in the same room with her royal mistress, she was so much engaged with Andres de Cabrera, that half a dozen thrones might have been disposed of between the royal pair, and she none the wiser.

Although Isabella did not lose that mild reserve and feminine modesty that threw so winning a grace around her person, even to the day of her death, she gradually grew more calm as the discourse proceeded; and falling back on her self-respect, womanly dignity, and,

not a little, on those stores of knowledge that she had been diligently collecting, while others similarly situated had wasted their time in the vanities of courts, she was quickly at her ease, if not wholly in that tranquil state of mind to which she had been accustomed.

"I trust there can now be no longer any delay to the celebration of our union, by holy church," observed the King, in continuation of the subject. "All that can be required of us both, as those entrusted with the cares and interests of realms, hath been observed, and I may have a claim to look to my own happiness. We are not strangers to each other, Doña Isabella; for our grandfathers were brothers — and from infancy up have I been taught to reverence thy virtues, and to strive to emulate thy holy duty to God."

"I have not betrothed myself lightly, Don Fernando," returned the Princess, blushing even while she assumed the majesty of a queen; "and with the subject so fully discussed, the wisdom of the union so fully established, and the necessity of promptness so apparent, no idle

delays shall proceed from me. I thought that the ceremony might be performed on the fourth day from this, which will give us both time to prepare for an occasion so solemn, by suitable attention to the offices of the church."

"It must be as thou willest," said the King, respectfully bowing; "and now there remaineth but a few preparations, and we shall have no reproaches of forgetfulness. Thou knowest, Doña Isabella, how sorely my father is beset by his enemies, and I need scarce tell thee that his coffers are empty. In good sooth, my fair cousin, nothing but my earnest desire to possess myself, at as early a day as possible, of the precious boon that Providence and thy goodness'

"Mingle not, Don Fernando, any of the acts of God and his providence, with the wisdom and petty expedients of his creatures," said Isabella, earnestly.

"To seize upon the precious boon, then, that Providence appeared willing to bestow," rejoined the King, crossing himself, while he bowed his head, as much, perhaps, in deference

to the pious feelings of his affianced wife, as in deference to a higher Power — "would not admit of delay, and we quitted Zaragosa better provided with hearts loyal towards the treasures we were to find in Valladolid, than with gold. Even that we had, by a mischance, hath gone to enrich some lucky varlet in an inn."

"Doña Beatriz de Bobadilla hath acquainted me with the mishap," said Isabella, smiling; "and truly we shall commence our married lives with but few of the goods of the world in present possession. I have little more to offer thee, Fernando, than a true heart, and a spirit that I think may be trusted for its fidelity."

"In obtaining thee, my excellent cousin, I obtain sufficient to satisfy the desires of any reasonable man. Still, something is due to our rank and future prospects, and it shall not be said that thy nuptials passed like those of a common subject."

"Under ordinary circumstances it might not appear seemly for one of my sex to furnish the means for her own bridal," answered the

princess, the blood stealing to her face until it crimsoned even her brow and temples; maintaining, otherwise, that beautiful tranquillity of mien which marked her ordinary manner — "but the well-being of two states depending on our union, vain emotions must be suppressed. I am not without jewels, and Valladolid hath many Hebrews: thou wilt permit me to part with the baubles for such an object."

"So that thou preservest for me the jewel in which that pure mind is encased," said the King of Sicily, gallantly, "I care not if I never see another. But there will not be this need; for our friends, who have more generous souls than well-filled coffers too, can give such warranty to the lenders as will procure the means. I charge myself with this duty, for henceforth, my cousin — may I not say my betrothed?"

"The term is even dearer than any that belongeth to blood, Fernando," answered the Princess, with a simple sincerity of manner that set at nought the ordinary affectations and

artificial feelings of her sex, while it left the deepest reverence for her modesty — " and we might be excused for using it. I trust God will bless our union, not only to our own happiness, but to that of our people."

" Then, my betrothed, henceforth we have but a common fortune, and thou wilt trust in me for the provision for thy wants."

" Nay, Fernando," answered Isabella, smiling, " imagine what we will, we cannot imagine ourselves the children of two hidalgos about to set forth in the world with humble dowries. Thou art a king, even now ; and by the treaty of Toros de Guisando, I am solemnly recognized as the heiress of Castile. We must, therefore, have our separate means, as well as our separate duties, though I trust hardly our separate interests."

" Thou wilt never find me failing in that respect which is due to thy rank, or in that duty which it befitteth me to render thee, as the head of our ancient House, next to thy royal brother, the King."

" Thou hast well considered, Don Fernando,

the treaty of marriage, and accepted cheerfully, I trust, all of its several conditions?"

"As becometh the importance of the measures, and the magnitude of the benefit I was to receive."

"I would have them acceptable to thee, as well as expedient; for, though so soon to become thy wife, I can never cease to remember that I shall be Queen of this country."

"Thou mayest be assured, my beautiful betrothed, that Ferdinand of Aragon will be the last to deem thee aught else."

"I look on my duties as coming from God, and on myself as one rigidly accountable to him for their faithful discharge. Sceptres may not be treated as toys, Fernando, to be trifled with; for man beareth no heavier burthen than when he beareth a crown."

"The maxims of our House have not been forgotten in Aragon, my betrothed — and I rejoice to find that they are the same in both kingdoms."

"We are not to think principally of ourselves in entering upon this engagement," con-

tinued Isabella, earnestly — "for that would be supplanting the duties of princes by the feelings of the lover. Thou hast frequently perused, and sufficiently conned the marriage articles, I trust?"

"There hath been sufficient leisure for that, my cousin, as they have now been signed these nine months."

"If I may have seemed to thee exacting in some particulars," continued Isabella, with the same earnest and beautiful simplicity as usually marked her deportment in all the relations of life — "it is because the duties of a sovereign may not be overlooked. Thou knowest, moreover, Fernando, the influence that the husband is wont to acquire over the wife, and wilt feel the necessity of my protecting my Castilians, in the fullest manner, against my own weaknesses."

"If thy Castilians do not suffer until they suffer from that cause, Doña Isabella, their lot will indeed be blessed."

"These are words of gallantry, and I must reprove their use on an occasion so serious, Fernando. I am a few months thy senior, and

shall assume an elder sister's rights, until they are lost in the obligations of a wife. Thou hast seen in those articles, how anxiously I would protect my Castilians against any supremacy of the stranger. Thou knowest that many of the greatest of this realm are opposed to our union, through apprehension of Aragonese sway, and wilt observe how studiously we have striven to appease their jealousies."

"Thy motives, Doña Isabella, have been understood, and thy wishes in this and all other particulars shall be respected."

"I would be thy faithful and submissive wife," returned the Princess, with an earnest but gentle look at her betrothed; "but I would also that Castile should preserve her rights and her independence. What will be thy influence, the maiden that freely bestoweth her hand need hardly say; but we must preserve the appearance of separate states."

"Confide in me, my cousin. They who live fifty years hence will say that Don Fernando knew how to respect his obligations and to discharge his duty."

"There is the stipulation, too, to war upon the Moor. I shall never feel that the Christians of Spain have been true to the faith, while a follower of the arch-impostor of Mecca remaineth in the Peninsula."

"Thou and thy Archbishop could not have imposed a more agreeable duty, than to place my lance in rest against the Infidels. My spurs have been gained in those wars, already; and no sooner shall we be crowned, than thou wilt see my perfect willingness to aid in driving back the miscreants to their original sands."

"There remaineth but one thing more upon my mind, gentle cousin. Thou knowest the evil influence that besets my brother, and that it hath disaffected a large portion of his nobles as well as of his cities. We shall both be sorely tempted to wage war upon him, and to assume the sceptre before it pleaseth God to accord it to us, in the course of nature. I would have thee respect Don Enriquez, not only as the head of our royal House, but as my brother and anointed master. Should evil counsellors press hm to attempt aught against our persons

or rights, it will be lawful to resist; but I pray thee, Fernando, on no excuse seek to raise thy hand in rebellion against my rightful sovereign."

"Let Don Enriquez, then, be chary of his Beltraneja!" answered the Prince, with warmth. "By St. Peter! I have rights of mine own that come before those of that ill-begotten mongrel! The whole house of Trastamara hath an interest in stifling that spurious scion which hath been so fraudulently engrafted on its princely stock!"

"Thou art warm, Don Fernando, and even the eye of Beatriz de Bobadilla reproveth thy heat. The unfortunate Joanna never can impair our rights to the throne, for there are few nobles in Castile so unworthy as to wish to see the crown bestowed where it is believed the blood of Pelayo doth not flow."

"Don Enriquez hath not kept faith with thee, Isabella, since the treaty of Toros de Guisando!"

"My brother is surrounded by wicked counsellors — and then, Fernando" — the Princess

blushed crimson as she spoke — "neither have we been able rigidly to adhere to that convention, since one of its conditions was that my hand should not be bestowed without the consent of the King."

"He hath driven us into this measure, and hath only to reproach himself with our failure on this point."

"I endeavour so to view it, though many have been my prayers for forgiveness of this seeming breach of faith. I am not superstitious, Fernando, else might I think God would frown on a union that is contracted in the face of pledges like these. But, it is well to distinguish between motives, and we have a right to believe that He who readeth the heart, will not judge the well-intentioned severely. Had not Don Enriquez attempted to seize my person, with the plain purpose of forcing me to a marriage against my will, this decisive step could not have been necessary, and would not have been taken."

"I have reason to thank my patron saint, beautiful cousin, that thy will was less compliant than thy tyrants had believed."

"I could not plight my troth to the King of Portugal, or to Monsieur de Guienne, or to any that they proposed to me for my future lord," answered Isabella ingenuously. "It ill befitteth royal or noble maidens to set up their own inexperienced caprices in opposition to the wisdom of their friends, and the task is not difficult for a virtuous wife to learn to love her husband, when nature and opinion are not too openly violated in the choice; but I have had too much thought for my soul to wish to expose it to so severe a trial, in contracting the marriage duties."

"I feel that I am only too unworthy of thee, Isabella — but thou must train me to be that thou wouldest wish: I can only promise thee a most willing and attentive scholar."

The discourse now became more general, Isabella indulging her natural curiosity and affectionate nature, by making many inquiries concerning her different relatives in Aragon. After the interview had lasted two hours or more, the King of Sicily returned to Dueñas, with the same privacy as he had observed in

entering the town. The royal pair parted with feelings of increased esteem and respect, Isabella indulging in those gentle anticipations of domestic happiness that more properly belong to the tender nature of woman.

The marriage took place, with suitable pomp, on the morning of the 19th October, 1469, in the chapel of John de Vivero's palace; no less than two thousand persons, principally of condition, witnessing the ceremony. Just as the officiating priest was about to commence the offices, the eye of Isabella betrayed uneasiness, and turning to the Archbishop of Toledo, she said,—

"Your Grace hath promised that there should be nothing wanting to the consent of the Church on this solemn occasion. It is known that Don Fernando of Aragon and I stand within the prohibited degrees."

"Most true, my lady Isabella," returned the prelate, with a composed mien and a paternal smile. "Happily our Holy Father Pius hath removed this impediment, and the Church smileth on this blessed union in every particular."

The Archbishop then took out of his pocket a dispensation, which he read in a clear, sonorous, steady voice; when every shade disappeared from the serene brow of Isabella, and the ceremony proceeded. Years elapsed before this pious and submissive Christian princess discovered that she had been imposed on, the bull that was then read having been an invention of the old King of Aragon and the prelate, not without suspicions of a connivance on the part of the bridegroom. This deception had been practised from a perfect conviction that the sovereign pontiff was too much under the influence of the King of Castile to consent to bestow the boon in opposition to that monarch's wishes. It was several years before Sixtus IV. repaired this wrong, by granting a more genuine authority.

Nevertheless Ferdinand and Isabella became man and wife. What followed in the next twenty years must be rather glanced at than related. Henry IV. resented the step, and vain attempts were made to substitute his supposititious child, La Beltraneja, in the place of his

sister, as successor to the throne. A civil war ensued, during which Isabella steadily refused to assume the crown, though often entreated: limiting her efforts to the maintenance of her rights as heiress presumptive. In 1474, or five years after her marriage, Don Henry died, and she then became Queen of Castile, though her spurious niece was also proclaimed by a small party among her subjects. The war of the succession, as it was called, lasted five years longer, when Joanna, or La Beltraneja, assumed the veil, and the rights of Isabella were generally acknowledged. About the same time died Don John II., when Ferdinand mounted the throne of Aragon. These events virtually reduced the sovereignties of the Peninsula, which had so long been cut up into petty states, to four, viz., the possessions of Ferdinand and Isabella, which included Castile, Leon, Aragon, Valencia, and many other of the finest provinces of Spain; Navarre, an insignificant kingdom in the Pyrenees; Portugal, much as it exists to-day; and Granada, the last abiding place of the Moor, north of the strait of Gibraltar.

Neither Ferdinand, nor his royal consort, was forgetful of that clause in their marriage contract, which bound the former to undertake a war for the destruction of the Moorish power. The course of events, however, caused a delay of many years in putting this long-projected plan in execution; but when the time finally arrived, that Providence which seemed disposed to conduct the pious Isabella, through a train of important incidents, from the reduced condition in which we have just described her to have been, to the summit of human power, did not desert its favourite. Success succeeded success — and victory, victory; until the Moor had lost fortress after fortress, town after town, and was finally besieged in his very capital, his last hold in the peninsula. As the reduction of Granada was an event that, in Christian eyes, was to be ranked second only to the rescuing of the holy sepulchre from the hands of the Infidels, so was it distinguished by some features of singularity, that have probably never before marked the course of a siege. The place submitted on

the 25th November 1491, twenty-two years after the date of the marriage just mentioned, and, it may not be amiss to observe, on the very day of the year, that has become memorable in the annals of America, as that on which the English, for centuries later, reluctantly yielded their last foothold on the coast of the republic.

In the course of the preceding summer, while the Spanish forces lay before the town, and Isabella, with her children, were anxious witnesses of the progress of events, an accident occurred that had well-nigh proved fatal to the royal family, and brought destruction on the Christian arms. The pavilion of the queen took fire, and was consumed, placing the whole encampment in the utmost jeopardy. Many of the tents of the nobles were also destroyed, and much treasure, in the shape of jewelry and plate, was lost, though the injury went no farther. In order to guard against the recurrence of such an accident, and probably viewing the subjection of Granada as the great act of their mutual reign — for, as yet,

Time threw his veil around the future, and but one human eye foresaw the greatest of all the events of the period, which was still in reserve —the sovereigns resolved on attempting a work, that, of itself, would render this siege memorable. The plan of a regular town was made, and labourers set about the construction of good substantial edifices, in which to lodge the army; thus converting the warfare into that of something like city against city. In three months this stupendous work was completed, with its avenues, streets, and squares, and received the name of Santa Fé, or Holy Faith, an appellation quite as well suited to the zeal which could achieve such a work, in the heat of a campaign, as to that general reliance on the providence of God which animated the Christians in carrying on the war. The construction of this place struck terror into the hearts of the Moors, for they considered it a proof that their enemies intended to give up the conflict only with their lives; and it is highly probable that it had a direct and immediate influence on the submis-

sion of Boabdil, the King of Granada, who yielded the Alhambra a few weeks after the Spaniards had taken possession of their new abode.

Santa Fé still exists, and is visited by the traveller as a place of curious origin; while it is rendered remarkable by the fact — real or assumed — that it is the only town of any size in Spain that has never been under Moorish sway.

The main incidents of our tale will now transport us to this era, and to this scene; all that has been related, as yet, being merely introductory matter, to prepare the reader for the events that are to follow.

CHAPTER IV.

What thing a right line is, the learned know;
But how availes that him, who in the right
Of life and manners doth desire to grow?
What then are all these humane arts, and lights,
But seas of errors? In whose depths who sound,
Of truth finde only shadowes, and no ground.

HUMAN LEARNING.

THE morning of the 2nd of January 1492, was ushered in with a solemnity and pomp that were unusual even in a court and camp as much addicted to religious observances and royal magnificence, as that of Ferdinand and Isabella. The sun had scarce appeared, when all in the extraordinary little city of Santa Fé were afoot, and elate with triumph. The negotiations for the surrender of Granada, which had been going on secretly for weeks, were

terminated; the army and nation had been formally apprised of their results, and this was the day set for the entry of the conquerors.

The court had been in mourning for Don Alonso of Portugal, the husband of the Princess Royal of Castile, who had died a bridegroom; but on this joyous occasion the trappings of woe were cast aside, and all appeared in their gayest and most magnificent apparel. At an hour that was still early, the Grand Cardinal moved forward, ascending what is called the Hill of Martyrs, at the head of a strong body of troops, with a view to take possession. While making the ascent, a party of Moorish cavaliers were met; and at their head rode one in whom, by the dignity of his mien and the anguish of his countenance, it was easy to recognize the mental suffering of Boabdil, or Abdallah, the deposed monarch. The cardinal pointed out the position occupied by Ferdinand, who, with that admixture of piety and worldly policy which were so closely interwoven in his character, had refused to

enter within the walls of the conquered city, until the symbol of Christ had superseded the banners of Mahomet; and who had taken his station at some distance from the gates, with a purpose and display of humility that were suited to the particular fanaticism of the period. As the interview that occurred has often been related, and twice quite recently by distinguished writers of our own country, it is unnecessary to dwell on it here. Abdallah next sought the presence of the purer-minded and gentle Isabella, where his reception, with less affectation of the character, had more of the real charity and compassion of the Christian; when he went his way towards that pass in the mountains that has ever since been celebrated as the point where he took his last view of the palaces and towers of his fathers, from which it has obtained the poetical and touching name of El Ultimo Suspiro Del Moro.

Although the passage of the last King of Granada, from his palace to the hills, was in no manner delayed, as it was grave and conducted with dignity, it consequently occupied

some time. These were hours in which the multitude covered the highways, and the adjacent fields were garnished with a living throng, all of whom kept their eyes riveted on the towers of the Alhambra, where the signs of possession were anxiously looked for by every good Catholic who witnessed the triumph of his religion.

Isabella, who had made this conquest a condition in the articles of marriage — whose victory in truth it was — abstained, with her native modesty, from pressing forward on this occasion. She had placed herself at some distance in the rear of the position of Ferdinand. Still, unless indeed we except the long-coveted towers of the Alhambra, she was the centre of attraction. She appeared in royal magnificence, as due to the glory of the occasion; her beauty always rendered her an object of admiration; her mildness, inflexible justice, and unyielding truth had won all hearts; and she was really the person who was most to profit by the victory, Granada being attached to her own crown of Castile, and not to that of Aragon, a

country that possessed little or no contiguous territory.

Previously to the appearance of Abdallah, the crowd moved freely, in all directions; multitudes of civilians having flocked to the camp to witness the entry. Among others were many friars, priests and monks, the war, indeed, having the character of a crusade. The throng of the curious was densest near the person of the Queen, where, in truth, the magnificence of the court was the most imposing. Around this spot, in particular, congregated most of the religious, for they felt that the pious mind of Isabella created a sort of moral atmosphere in and near her presence, that was peculiarly suited to their habits, and favourable to their consideration. Among others, was a friar of prepossessing mien, and, in fact, of noble birth, who had been respectfully addressed as Father Pedro, by several grandees, as he made his way from the immediate presence of the Queen, to a spot where the circulation was easier. He was accompanied by a youth of an air so much superior to that of

most of those who did not appear that day in the saddle, that he attracted general attention. Although not more than twenty, it was evident, from his muscular frame, and embrowned but florid cheeks, that he was acquainted with exposure; and by his bearing, many thought, notwithstanding he did not appear in armour on an occasion so peculiarly military, that both his mien and his frame had been improved by familiarity with war. His attire was simple, as if he rather avoided than sought observation, but it was, nevertheless, such as was worn by none but the noble. Several of those who watched this youth, as he reached the less confined portions of the crowd, had seen him received graciously by Isabella, whose hand he had even been permitted to kiss, a favour that the formal and fastidious court of Castile seldom bestowed, except on the worthy, or, on those, at least, who were unusually illustrious from their birth. Some whispered that he was a Guzman, a family that was almost royal; while others thought that he might be a Ponce, a name that had got to be one of the first in

Spain, through the deeds of the renowned Marquis-Duke of Cadiz, in this very war; while others, again, affected to discern in his lofty brow, firm step, and animated eye, the port and countenance of a Mendoza.

It was evident that the subject of all these commentaries was unconscious of the notice that was attracted by his vigorous form, handsome face, and elastic, lofty tread; for, like one accustomed to be observed by inferiors, his attention was confined to such objects as amused his eye, or pleased his fancy, while he lent a willing ear to the remarks that, from time to time, fell from the lips of his reverend companion.

"This is a most blessed and glorious day for Christianity!" observed the friar, after a pause a little longer than common. "An impious reign of seven hundred years hath expired, and the Moor is at length lowered from his pride; while the cross is elevated above the banners of the false prophet. Thou hast had ancestors, my son, who might almost arise from their tombs, and walk the earth in exultation, if the

tidings of these changes were permitted to reach the souls of Christians long since departed."

"The blessed Maria intercede for them, father, that they may not be disturbed, even to see the Moor unhoused; for I doubt much, agreeable as the Infidel hath made it, if they find Granada as pleasant as Paradise."

"Son Don Luis, thou hast got much levity of speech, in thy late journeyings; and I doubt if thou art as mindful of thy paters and confessions, as when under the care of thy excellent mother, of sainted memory!"

This was not only said reprovingly, but with a warmth that amounted nearly to anger.

"Chide me not so warmly, father, for a lightness of speech that cometh of youthful levity, rather than of disrespect for holy church. — Nay, thou rebukest warmly, and then, as I come like a penitent to lay my transgressions before thee, and to seek absolution, thou fastenest thine eye on vacancy, and gazest as if one of the spirits of which thou so lately spokest actually had arisen and come to see the

Moor crack his heart-strings at quitting his beloved Alhambra!"

"Dost see that man, Luis?" demanded the friar, still gazing in a fixed direction, though he made no gesture to indicate to which particular individual of the many who were passing in all directions, he especially alluded.

"By my veracity, I see a thousand, father, though not one to fasten the eye as if he were fresh from Paradise. Would it be exceeding discretion to ask who, or what, hath thus riveted thy gaze?"

"Dost see yonder person of high and commanding stature, and in whom gravity and dignity are so singularly mingled with an air of poverty; or, if not absolutely of poverty — for he is better clad, and seemingly in more prosperity now, than I remember ever to have seen him — still, evidently not of the rich and noble; while his bearing and carriage would seem to bespeak him at least a monarch?"

"I think I now perceive him thou meanest, father; a man of very grave and reverend appearance, though of simple deportment. I see

nothing extravagant, or ill placed, either in his attire or in his bearing."

"I mean not that;—but there is a loftiness in his dignified countenance that one is not accustomed to meet in those who are unused to power."

"To me he hath the air and dress of a superior navigator or pilot—of a man accustomed to the seas—ay, he hath sundry symbols about him that bespeak such a pursuit."

"Thou art right, Don Luis, for such is his calling. He cometh of Genoa, and his name is Christoval Colon—or, as they term it in Italy—Christoforo Colombo."

"I remember to have heard of an admiral of that name, who did good service in the wars of the south, and who formerly led a fleet into the far east."

"This is not he, but one of humbler habits, though possibly of the same blood, seeing that both are derived from the identical place. This is no admiral, though he would fain become one—ay, even a king!"

"The man is then either of a weak mind, or of a light ambition."

"He is neither. In mind, he hath outdone many of our most learned churchmen; and it is due to his piety to say that a more devout Christian doth not exist in Spain. It is plain, son, that thou hast been much abroad, and little at court, or thou would'st have known the history of this extraordinary being, at the mention of his name, which has been the source of merriment for the frivolous and gay, this many a year, and which has thrown the thoughtful and prudent into more doubts than many a fierce and baneful heresy."

"Thou stirrest my curiosity, father, by such language. Who and what is the man?"

"An enigma that neither prayers to the Virgin, the learning of the cloisters, nor a zealous wish to reach the truth, hath enabled me to read. Come hither, Luis, to this bit of rock where we can be seated, and I will relate to thee the opinions that render this being so extraordinary. Thou must know, son, it is now seven years since this man first appeared among us. He sought employment as a discoverer, pretending that by steering out into

the ocean, on a western course, for a great and unheard of distance, he could reach the farther Indies, with the rich island of Cipango, and the kingdom of Cathay, of which one Marco Polo hath left us some most extraordinary legends."

"By Saint James of blessed memory! the man must be short of his wits!" interrupted Don Luis, laughing. "In what way could this thing be, unless the earth were round — the Indies lying east, and not west of us?"

"That hath been often objected to his notions; but the man hath ready answers to much weightier arguments."

"What weightier than this can be found? Our own eyes tell us that the earth is flat."

"Therein he differeth from most men — and to own the truth, son Luis, not without some show of reason. He is a navigator, as thou wilt understand, and he replies that, on the ocean, when a ship is seen from afar, her upper sails are first perceived, and that as she draweth nearer, her lower sails, and finally her

hull cometh into view. But, thou hast been over sea, and may have observed something of this?"

"Truly, have I, father. While mounting the English sea, we met a gallant cruiser of the king's, and, as thou said'st, we first perceived her upper sail, a white speck upon the water — then followed sail after sail, until we came nigh and saw her gigantic hull, with a very goodly show of bombards and cannons — some twenty at least, in all."

"Then thou agreest with this Colon, and thinkest the earth round?"

"By Saint George of England! not I. I have seen too much of the world to traduce its fair surface in so heedless a manner. England, France, Burgundy, Germany, and all those distant countries of the north, are just as level and flat as our own Castile."

"Why then didst thou see the upper sails of the Englishman first?"

"Why, father — why — because they were first visible. Yes, because they came first into view."

"Do the English put the largest of their sails uppermost on the masts?"

"They would be fools if they did. Though no great navigators — our neighbours the Portuguese, and the people of Genoa, exceeding all others in that craft — though no great navigators, the English are not so surpassingly stupid. Thou wilt remember the force of the winds, and understand that the larger the sail the lower should be its position."

"Then how happened it that thou sawest the smaller object before the larger?"

"Truly, excellent Fray Pedro, thou hast not conversed with this Christoforo for nothing! A question is not a reason."

"Socrates was fond of questions, son; but *he* expected answers."

"*Peste!* as they say at the court of King Louis. I am not Socrates, my good father, but thy old pupil and kinsman, Luis de Bobadilla, the truant nephew of the queen's favourite, the Marchioness of Moya, and as well-born a cavalier as there is in Spain — though somewhat given to roving, if my enemies are to be believed."

"Neither thy pedigree, thy character, nor thy vagaries, need be given to me, Don Luis de Bobadilla, since I have known thee and thy career from childhood. Thou hast one merit that none will deny thee, and that is, a respect for truth; and never hast thou more completely vindicated thy character, in this particular, than when thou saidst thou wert not Socrates."

The worthy friar's good-natured smile, as he made this sally, took off some of its edge; and the young man laughed, as if too conscious of his own youthful follies to resent what he heard.

"But, dear Fray Pedro, lay aside thy government, for once, and stoop to a rational discourse with me on this extraordinary subject. *Thou*, surely, wilt not pretend that the earth is round?"

"I do not go as far as some, on this point, Luis, for I see difficulties with Holy Writ by the admission. Still, this matter of the sails much puzzleth me, and I have often felt a desire to go from one port to another by sea, in order to witness it. Were it not for the ex-

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ceeding nausea that I ever feel in a boat, I might attempt the experiment."

"That would be a worthy consummation of all thy wisdom!" exclaimed the young man, laughing. "Fray Pedro de Carrascal turned rover, like his old pupil, and that, too, astride a vagary! But set thy heart at rest, my honoured kinsman and excellent instructor, for I can save thee the trouble. In all my journeyings, by sea and by land — and thou knowest that, for my years, they have been many — I have ever found the earth flat, and the ocean the flattest portion of it, always excepting a few turbulent and uneasy waves."

"No doubt it so seemeth to the eye; but this Colon, who hath voyaged far more than thou, thinketh otherwise. He contendeth that the earth is a sphere, and that, by sailing west, he can reach points that have been already attained by journeying east."

"By San Lorenzo! but the idea is a bold one! Doth the man really propose to venture out into the broad Atlantic, and even to cross it to some distant and unknown land?"

"That is his very idea! and for seven weary years hath he solicited the court to furnish him with the means. Nay, as I hear, he hath passed much more time — other seven years, perhaps — in urging his suit in different lands."

"If the earth be round," continued Don Luis, with a musing air, "what preventeth all the water from flowing to the lower parts of it? How is it that we have any seas at all? and if, as thou hast hinted, he deemeth the Indies on the other side, how is it that their people stand erect? — it cannot be done without placing the feet uppermost."

"That difficulty hath been presented to Colon, but he treateth it lightly. Indeed, most of our churchmen are getting to believe that there is no up or down, except as it relateth to the surface of the earth; so that no great obstacle existeth in that point."

"Thou would'st not have me understand, father, that a man can walk on his head — and that, too, with the noble member in the air? By San Francisco! thy men of Cathay must

have talons like a cat, or they would be falling quickly?"

"Whither, Luis?"

"Whither, Fray Pedro?—to Tophet, or the bottomless pit. It can never be that men walk on their heads, heels uppermost, with no better foundation than the atmosphere. The caravels, too, must sail on their masts—and that would be rare navigation! What would prevent the sea from tumbling out of its bed, and falling on the Devil's fires and extinguishing them?"

"Son Luis," interrupted the monk, gravely, "thy lightness of speech is carried too far. But, if thou so much deridest the opinion of this Colon, what are thine own notions of the formation of this earth, that God hath so honoured with his spirit and his presence?"

"That it is as flat as the buckler of the Moor I slew in the last sortie, which is as flat as steel can hammer iron."

"Dost thou think it hath limits?"

"That do I—and please Heaven and Doña Mercedes de Valverde, I will see them before I die!"

"Then thou fanciest there is an edge, or precipice, at the four sides of the world, which men may reach, and where they can stand and look off, as from an exceeding high platform?"

"The picture doth not lose, father, for the touch of thy pencil! I have never bethought me of this before; and yet some such spot there must be, one would think. By San Fernando himself! that would be a place to try the metal of even Don Alonso de Ojeda, who might stand on the margin of the earth, put his foot on a cloud, and cast an orange to the moon!"

"Thou hast bethought thee little of any thing serious, I fear, Luis; but to me, this opinion and this project of Colon are not without merit. I see but two serious objections to them, one of which is, the difficulty connected with Holy Writ — and the other, the vast and incomprehensible, nay, useless, extent of the ocean that must necessarily separate us from Cathay; else should we long since have heard from that quarter of the world."

"Do the learned favour the man's notions?"

"The matter hath been seriously argued before a council held at Salamanca, where men were much divided upon it. One serious obstacle is the apprehension that should the world prove to be round, and could a ship even succeed in getting to Cathay by the west, there would be great difficulty in her ever returning, since there must be, in some manner, an ascent and a descent. I must say that most men deride this Colon; and I fear he will never reach his island of Cipango, as he doth not seem in the way even to set forth on the journey. I marvel that he should now be here, it having been said he had taken his final departure for Portugal."

"Dost thou say, father, that the man hath long been in Spain?" demanded Don Luis, gravely, with his eye riveted on the dignified form of Columbus, who stood calmly regarding the gorgeous spectacle of the triumph, at no great distance from the rock where the two had taken their seats.

"Seven weary years hath he been soliciting the rich and the great to furnish him with the means of undertaking his favourite voyage."

"Hath he the gold to prefer so long a suit?"

"By his appearance, I should think him poor — nay, I know that he hath toiled for bread, at the occupation of a map-maker. One hour he hath passed in arguing with philosophers and in soliciting princes, while the next hath been occupied in labouring for the food that he hath taken for sustenance."

"Thy description, father, hath whetted curiosity to so keen an edge, that I would fain speak with this Colon. I see he remaineth yonder, in the crowd, and will go and tell him that I, too, am somewhat of a navigator, and will extract from him a few of his peculiar ideas."

"And in what manner wilt thou open the acquaintance, son?"

"By telling him that I am Don Luis de Bobadilla, the nephew of the Doña Beatriz of Moya, and a noble of one of the best houses of Castile."

"And this thou thinkest will suffice for thy purpose, Luis," returned the friar, smiling. "No — no — my son; this may do with most

map-sellers, but it will not effect thy wishes with yonder Christoval Colon. That man is so filled with the vastness of his purposes; is so much raised up with the magnitude of the results that his mind intently comtemplateth day and night; seemeth so conscious of his own powers, that even kings and princes can, in no manner, lessen his dignity. That which thou proposest, Don Fernando, our honoured master might scarcely attempt, and hope to escape without some rebuke of manner, if not of tongue."

"By all the blessed saints! Fray Pedro, thou givest an extraordinary account of this man, and only increasest the desire to know him. Wilt thou charge thyself with the introduction?"

"Most willingly, for I wish to inquire what hath brought him back to court, whence, I had understood, he lately went, with the intent to go elsewhere with his projects. Leave the mode in my hands, son Luis, and we will see what can be accomplished."

The friar and his mercurial young companion now arose from their seats on the rock,

and threaded the throng, taking the direction necessary to approach the man who had been the subject of their discourse, and still remained that of their thoughts. When near enough to speak, Fray Pedro stopped, and stood patiently waiting for a moment when he might catch the navigator's eye. This did not occur for several minutes, the looks of Colon being fixed on the towers of the Alhambra, where, at each instant, the signal of possession was expected to appear; and Luis de Bobadilla, who, truant, and errant, and volatile, and difficult to curb, as he had proved himself to be, never forgot his illustrious birth and the conventional distinctions attached to personal rank, began to manifest his impatience at being kept so long dancing attendance on a mere map-seller and a pilot. He in vain urged his companion to advance, however; but one of his own hurried movements at length drew aside the look of Columbus, when the eyes of the latter and of the friar met, and being old acquaintances, they saluted in the courteous manner of the age.

"I felicitate you, Señor Colon, on the glo-

rious termination of this siege, and rejoice that you are here to witness it, as I had heard affairs of magnitude had called you to another country."

"The hand of God, father, is to be traced in all things. You perceive in this success the victory of the cross; but to me it conveyeth a lesson of perseverance, and sayeth, as plainly as events can speak, that what God hath decreed, must come to pass."

"I like your application, Señor; as, indeed, I do most of your thoughts on our holy religion. Perseverance is truly necessary to salvation; and I doubt not that a fitting symbol to the same may be found in the manner in which our pious sovereigns have conducted this war, as well as in its glorious termination."

"True, father; and also doth it furnish a symbol to the fortunes of all enterprises that have the glory of God and the welfare of the church in view," answered Colon, or Columbus, as the name has been Latinized; his eye kindling with that latent fire which seems so deeply seated in the visionary and the enthu-

siast. "It may seem out of reason to you, to make such applications of these great events; but the triumph of their Highnesses this day, marvellously encourageth me to persevere, and not to faint, in my own weary pilgrimage, both leading to triumphs of the cross."

"Since you are pleased to speak of your own schemes, Señor Colon," returned the friar, ingenuously, "I am not sorry that the matter hath come up between us; for here is a youthful kinsman of mine, who hath been somewhat of a rover himself in the indulgence of a youthful fancy, that neither friends nor yet love could restrain: and having heard of your noble projects, he is burning with the desire to learn more of them from your own mouth, should it suit your condescension so to indulge him."

"I am always happy to yield to the praiseworthy wishes of the young and adventurous, and shall cheerfully communicate to your young friend all he may desire to know," answered Columbus, with a simplicity and dignity that at once put to flight all the notions

of superiority and affability with which Don Luis had intended to carry on the conversation, and which had the immediate effect to satisfy the young man that he was to be the obliged and honoured party in the intercourse that was to follow. "But, Señor, you have forgotten to give me the name of the cavalier."

"It is Don Luis de Bobadilla, a youth whose best claims to your notice, perhaps, are a most adventurous and roving spirit, and the fact that he may call your honoured friend the Marchioness of Moya, his aunt."

"Either would be sufficient, father. I love the spirit of adventure in the youthful; for it is implanted, no doubt, by God, in order that they may serve his all-wise and beneficent designs: and it is of such as these that my own chief worldly stay and support must be found. Then, next to Father Juan Perez de Marchena and Señor Alonzo de Quintanilla, do I esteem Doña Beatriz, among my fastest friends; her kinsman, therefore, will be certain of my esteem and respect."

All this sounded extraordinary to Don Luis;

for though the dress and appearance of this unknown stranger, who even spoke the Castilian with a foreign accent, were respectable, he had been told he was merely a pilot, or navigator, who earned his bread by toil: and it was not usual for the noblesse of Castile to be thus regarded, as it might be, with a condescending favour, by any inferior to those who could claim the blood and lineage of princes. At first he was disposed to resent the words of the stranger; then to laugh in his face; but observing that the friar treated him with great deference, and secretly awed by the air of the reputed projector, he was not only successful in maintaining a suitable deportment, but he made a proper and courteous reply, such as became his name and breeding. The three then retired together, a little aloof from the thickest of the throng, and found seats also, on one of the rocks, of which so many were scattered about the place.

"Don Luis hath visited foreign lands, you say, father," said Columbus, who did not fail to lead the discourse, like one entitled to it by

rank, or personal claims, " and hath a craving for the wonders and dangers of the ocean?"

" Such hath been either his merit, or his fault, Señor; had he listened to the wishes of Doña Beatriz, or to my advice, he would not have thrown aside his knightly career for one so little in unison with his training and birth."

" Nay, father, you treat the youth with unmerited severity; he who passeth a life on the ocean, cannot be said to pass it in either an ignoble or a useless manner. God separated different countries by vast bodies of water, not with any intent to render their people strangers to each other, but doubtless that they might meet amid the wonders with which he hath adorned the ocean, and glorify his name and power so much the more. We all have our moments of thoughtlessness in youth, a period when we yield to our impulses rather than to our reason; and as I confess to mine, I am little disposed to bear too hard on Señor Don Luis, that he hath had his."

" You have probably battled with the Infidel, by sea, Señor Colon," observed the young

man, not a little embarrassed as to the manner in which he should introduce the subject he most desired."

"Ay, and by land, too, son"—the familiarity startled the young noble, though he could not take offence at it—"and by land, too. The time hath been, when I had a pleasure in relating my perils and escapes, which have been numerous, both from war and tempests; but since the power of God hath awakened my spirit to mightier things, that his will may be done, and his word spread throughout the whole earth, my memory ceaseth to dwell on them." Fray Pedro crossed himself, and Don Luis smiled and shrugged his shoulders, as one is apt to do when he listens to anything extravagant; but the navigator proceeded in the earnest, grave manner that appeared to belong to his character. "It is now very many years since I was engaged in that remarkable combat between the forces of my kinsman and namesake, the younger Colombo, as he was called, to distinguish him from his uncle, the ancient admiral of the same name, which took place

not far north from Cape St. Vincent. On that bloody day, we contended with the foe, Venetians richly laden, from morn till even, and yet the Lord carried me through the hot contest unharmed. On another occasion, the galley in which I fought was consumed by fire, and I had to find my way to land, no trifling distance, by the aid of an oar. To me it seemeth that the hand of God was in this, and that he would not have taken so signal and tender a care of one of his insignificant creatures, unless to use him largely for his own honour and glory."

Although the eye of the navigator grew brighter as he uttered this, and his cheek flushed with a species of holy enthusiasm, it was impossible to confound one so grave, so dignified, so measured even in his exaggerations — if such they were — with the idle and light-minded who mistake momentary impulses for indelible impressions, and passing vanities for the convictions that temper character. Fray Pedro, instead of smiling, or in any manner betraying that he regarded the other's opinions lightly, devoutly crossed himself again, and

showed by the sympathy expressed in his countenance, how much he entered into the profound religious faith of the speaker.

"The ways of God are often mysteries to his creatures," said the friar; "but we are taught that they all lead to the exaltation of his name, and to the glory of his attributes."

"It is so that I consider it, father; and with such views have I always regarded my own humble efforts to honour him. We are but instruments, and useless instruments, too, when we look at how little proceedeth from our own spirits and power."

"There cometh the blessed symbol that is our salvation and guide!" exclaimed the friar, holding out both arms eagerly, as if to embrace some distant object in the heavens, immediately falling to his knees, and bowing his shaven and naked head, in deep humility, to the earth.

Columbus turned his eyes in the direction indicated by his companion's gestures, and he beheld the large silver cross that the sovereigns had carried with them throughout the late war, as a pledge of its objects, glittering on the

principal tower of the Alhambra. At the next instant, the banners of Castile and of St. James were unfolded from other elevated places. Then came the song of triumph, mingled with the chaunts of the church. Te Deum was sung, and the choirs of the royal chapel chaunted in the open fields the praises of the Lord of Hosts. A scene of magnificent religious pomp, mingled with martial array, followed, that belongs rather to general history than to the particular and private incidents of our tale.

CHAPTER V.

Who hath not proved how feebly words essay
To fix one spark of beauty's heavenly ray?
Who doth not feel, until his failing sight
Faints into dimness with its own delight,
His changing cheek, his sinking heart confess
The might—the majesty of loveliness!

BYRON.

THAT night the court of Castile and Aragon slept in the palace of the Alhambra. As soon as the religious ceremony alluded to in the last chapter had terminated, the crowd rushed into the place, and the princes followed, with a dignity and state better suited to their high character. The young Christian nobles, accompanied by their wives and sisters — for the presence of Isabella, and the delay that attended the surrender, had drawn together a

vast many of the gentler sex, in addition to those whose duty it was to accompany their royal mistress — hurried eagerly through the celebrated courts and fretted apartments of this remarkable residence; nor was curiosity appeased even when night came to place a temporary stay to its indulgence. The court of the Lions, in particular, a place still renowned throughout Christendom for its remains of oriental beauty, had been left by Boabdil in the best condition; and, although it was midwinter, by the aid of human art it was even then gay with flowers; while the adjacent halls, those of the Two Sisters, and of Abencerrages, were brilliant with light, and alive with warriors and courtiers, dignified priests and luxuriant beauty.

Although no Spanish eye could be otherwise than familiar with the light peculiar graces of Moorish architecture, these of the Alhambra so much surpassed those of any other palace which had been erected by the Mussulman dynasties of that part of the world, that their glories struck the beholders with the freshness

of novelty, as well as with the magnificence of royalty. The rich conceits in stucco, an art of eastern origin, then little understood in Christendom; the graceful and fanciful Arabesques —which, improved on by the fancies of some of the greatest geniuses the world ever saw, have descended to our own times, and got to be so familiar in Europe, decorated the walls, while brilliant fountains cast their waters into the air, and fell in glittering spray, resembling diamonds.

Among the throng that moved through this scene of almost magical beauty, was Beatriz de Bobadilla, who had long been the wife of Don Andres de Cabrera, and was now generally known as the Marchioness of Moya; the constant, near, and confidential friend of the Queen, a character she retained until her royal mistress was numbered with the dead. On her arm leaned lightly, a youthful female, of an appearance so remarkable, that few strangers would have passed her without turning to take a second look at features and a countenance that

were seldom seen and forgotten. This was Doña Mercedes de Valverde, one of the noblest and richest heiresses of Castile; the relative, ward, and adopted daughter of the Queen's friend; favourite being hardly the term one would apply to the relation in which Doña Beatriz stood towards Isabella. It was not the particular beauty of Doña Mercedes, however, that rendered her appearance so remarkable and attractive; for, though feminine, graceful, of exquisite form, and even of pleasing features, there were many in that brilliant court who would generally be deemed fairer. But no other maiden of Castile had a countenance so illuminated by the soul within, or no other female face habitually wore so deep an impression of sentiment and sensibility; and the professed physiognomist would have delighted to trace the evidences of a deeply-seated, earnest, but unobtrusive enthusiasm, which even cast a shade of melancholy over a face that fortune and the heart had equally intended should be sunny and serene. Serene it was, notwithstanding; the shadow that rested on it seeming

to soften and render interesting its expression, rather than to disturb its tranquillity or to cloud its loveliness.

On the other side of the noble matron walked Luis de Bobadilla, keeping a little in advance of his aunt, in a way to permit his own dark flashing looks to meet, whenever feeling and modesty would allow it, the fine, expressive, blue eyes of Mercedes. The three conversed freely, for the royal personages had retired to their private apartments, and each group of passengers was so much entranced with the novelty of its situation and its own conversation, as to disregard the remarks of others.

"This is a marvel, Luis," observed Doña Beatriz, in continuation of a subject that evidently much interested them all, "that thou, a truant and a rover thyself, should now have heard for the first time of this Colon! It is many years since he has been soliciting their Highnesses for their royal aid in effecting his purposes. The matter of his schemes was solemnly debated before a council at Sala-

manca; and he hath not been without believers at the Court, itself."

"Among whom is to be classed Doña Beatriz de Cabrera," said Mercedes, with that melancholy smile that had the effect to bring out glimpses of all the deep but latent feeling that lay concealed beneath the surface: "I have often heard her Highness declare that Colon hath no truer friend in Castile."

"Her Highness is seldom mistaken, child — and never in my heart. I do uphold the man; for to me he seemeth one fitted for some great and honourable undertaking; and surely none greater hath ever been proposed or imagined by human mind, than this he urgeth. Think of our becoming acquainted with the nations of the other side of the earth, and of finding easy and direct means of communicating with them, and of imparting to them the consolations of Holy Church!"

"Ay, Señora my aunt," cried Luis, laughing, "and of walking in their delightful company with all our heels in the air, and our heads downwards! I hope this Colon hath

not neglected to practise a little in the art, for it will need some time to gain a sure foot, in such circumstances. He might commence on the sides of these mountains, by way of a horn-book, throwing the head boldly off at a right-angle; after which, the walls and towers of this Alhambra would make a very pretty grammar, or stepping-stone to new progress."

Mercedes had unconsciously but fervently pressed the arm of her guardian, as Doña Beatriz admitted her interest in the success of the great project; but at this sally of Don Luis, she looked serious, and threw a glance at him, that he himself felt to be reproachful. To win the love of his aunt's ward was the young man's most ardent wish; and a look of dissatisfaction could at any moment repress that exuberance of spirits which often led him into an appearance of levity that did injustice to the really sterling qualities of both his heart and mind. Under the influence of that look, then, he was not slow to repair the wrong he had done himself, by adding almost as soon as he had ceased to speak—

"The Doña Mercedes is of the discovering party, too, I see; this Colon appeareth to have had more success with the dames of Castile than with her nobles"—

"Is it extraordinary, Don Luis," interrupted the pensive-looking girl, "that women should have more confidence in merit, more generous impulses, more zeal for God, than men?"

"It must bé even so, since you and my aunt, Doña Beatriz, side with the navigator. But I am not always to be understood in the light I express myself;"—Mercedes now smiled, but this time it was archly—"I have never studied with the minstrels, nor, sooth to say, deeply with the churchmen. To be honest with you, I have been much struck with this noble idea; and if Señor Colon doth, in reality, sail in quest of Cathay and the Indies, I shall pray their Highnesses to let me be of the party, for, now that the Moor is subdued, there remaineth little for a noble to do in Spain."

"If thou should'st really go on this expedition," said Doña Beatriz, with grave irony, "there will, at least, be one human being topsy-

turvy, in the event of thy reaching Cathay. But yonder is an attendant of the Court; I doubt if her Highness doth not desire my presence."

The Lady of Moya was right — the messenger coming to announce to her that the Queen required her attendance. The manners of the day and country rendered it unseemly that Doña Mercedes should continue her promenade accompanied only by Don Luis, and the Marchioness led the way to her own apartments, where a saloon suitable to her rank and to her favour with the Queen, had been selected for her from among the numberless gorgeous rooms of the Moorish kings. Even here, the Marchioness paused a moment, in thought, before she would leave her errant nephew alone with her ward.

"Though a rover, he is no troubadour, and cannot charm thy ear with false rhymes. It were better, perhaps, that I sent him beneath thy balcony, with his guitar; but knowing so well his dulness, I will confide in it, and leave him with thee, for the few minutes that I

shall be absent. A cavalier who hath so strong a dislike to reversing the order of nature, will not surely condescend to go on his knees, even though it be to win a smile from the sweetest maiden in all Castile."

Don Luis laughed; Doña Beatriz smiled, as she kissed her ward, and left the room; while Doña Mercedes blushed, and riveted her gaze on the floor. Luis de Bobadilla was the declared suitor and sworn knight of Mercedes de Valverde; but, though so much favoured by birth, fortune, affinity, and figure, there existed some serious impediments to his success. In all that was connected with the considerations that usually decide such things, the union was desirable; but there existed, nevertheless, a strong influence to overcome, in the scruples of Doña Beatriz, herself. High-principled, accustomed to the just-minded views of her royal mistress, and too proud to do an unworthy act, the very advantages that a marriage with her ward offered to her nephew, had caused the Marchioness to hesitate. Don Luis had little of the Castilian gravity of character — and, by

many, his animal spirits were mistaken for lightness of disposition and levity of thought. His mother was a woman of a very illustrious French family; and national pride had induced most observers to fancy that the son inherited a constitutional disposition to frivolity, that was to be traced to the besetting weakness of a whole people. A consciousness of his being so viewed at home, had, indeed, driven the youth abroad; and as, like all observant travellers, he was made doubly sensible of the defects of his own state of society, on his return, a species of estrangement had grown up between him and his natural associates, that had urged the young man, again and again, to wander into foreign lands. Nothing, indeed, but his early and constantly increasing passion for Mercedes had induced him to return; a step that, fortunately for himself, he had last taken in time to assist in the reduction of Granada. Notwithstanding these traits, which, in a country like Castile, might be properly enough termed peculiarities, Don Luis de Bobadilla was a knight worthy of his lineage and name. His prowess in the field

and in the tourney, indeed, was so very marked as to give him a high military character, in despite of what were deemed his failings; and he passed rather as an inconsiderate and unsafe young man, than as one who was either debased or wicked. Martial qualities, in that age in particular, redeemed a thousand faults; and Don Luis had even been known to unhorse, in the tourney, Alonzo de Ojeda, then the most expert lance in Spain. Such a man could not be despised, though he might be distrusted. But the feeling which governed his aunt, referred quite as much to her own character as to his. Deeply conscientious, while she understood her nephew's real qualities much better than mere superficial observers, she had her doubts about the propriety of giving the rich heiress who was entrusted to her care, to so near a relative, when all could not applaud the act. She feared too, that her own partiality might deceive her, and that Luis might in truth be the light and frivolous being he sometimes appeared to be in Castilian eyes, and that the happiness of her ward would prove the sacrifice of the indiscre-

tion. With these doubts, then, while she secretly desired the union, she had in public looked coldly on her nephew's suit; and, though unable, without a harshness that circumstances would not warrant, to prevent all intercourse, she had not only taken frequent occasions to let Mercedes understand her distrust, but she had observed the precaution not to leave so handsome a suitor, notwithstanding he was often domiciliated in her own house, much alone with her ward.

The state of Mercedes' feelings was known only to herself. She was beautiful, of an honourable family, and an heiress; and, as human infirmities were as besetting beneath the stately mien of the fifteenth century, as they are to-day, she had often heard the supposed faults of Don Luis's character sneered at by those who felt distrustful of his good looks and his opportunities. Few young females would have had the courage to betray any marked preference under such circumstances, until prepared to avow their choice, and to take sides with its subject against the

world; and the quiet but deep enthusiasm that prevailed in the moral system of the fair young Castilian, was tempered by a prudence that prevented her from running into most of its lighter excesses. The forms and observances that usually surround young women of rank, came in aid of this native prudence; and even Don Luis himself, though he had watched the countenance and emotions of her to whom he had so long urged his suit with a lover's jealousy and a lover's instincts, was greatly in doubt whether he had succeeded in the least in touching her heart. By one of those unlooked-for concurrences of circumstances that so often decide the fortunes of men, whether as lovers or in more worldly-minded pursuits, these doubts were now about to be unexpectedly and suddenly removed.

The triumph of the Christian arms, the novelty of her situation, and the excitement of the whole scene, had aroused the feelings of Mercedes from that coy concealment in which they usually lay smothered beneath the covering of maiden diffidence; and throughout the evening her smile had been more open, her eye

brighter, and her cheeks more deeply flushed, than was usual even with one whose smiles were always sweet, whose eyes were never dull, and whose cheeks answered so sensitively to the varying impulses within.

As his aunt quitted the room, leaving him alone with Mercedes for the first time since his return from his last ramble, Don Luis eagerly threw himself on a stool that stood near the feet of his adored, who placed herself on a sumptuous couch, that, twenty-four hours before, had held the person of a princess of Abdallah's family.

"Much as I honour and reverence her Highness," the young man hurriedly commenced, "my respect and veneration are now increased tenfold! Would that she might send for my beloved aunt thrice where she now wants her services only once! and may her presence become so necessary to her sovereign, that the affairs of Castile cannot go on without her counsel, if so blessed an opportunity as this, to tell you all I feel, Doña Mercedes, is to follow her obedience!"

"It is not they who are most fluent of

speech, or the most vehement, who always feel the deepest, Don Luis de Bobadilla."

"Nor do they feel the least. Mercedes, thou canst not doubt my love! It hath grown with my growth — increased with each increase of my ideas — until it hath got to be so interwoven with my mind itself, that I can scarce use a faculty that thy dear image doth not mingle with it. In all that is beautiful I behold thee; if I listen to the song of a bird, it is thy carol to the lute; or if I feel the gentle south wind from the fragrant isles fanning my cheek, I would fain think it thy sigh."

"You have dwelt so much among the light conceits of the French court, Don Luis, you appear to have forgotten that the heart of a Castilian girl is too true, and too sincere, to meet such rhapsodies with favour."

Had Don Luis been older, or more experienced in the sex, he would have been flattered by this rebuke — for he would have detected in the speaker's manner both feeling of a gentler nature than her words expressed, and a tender regret.

"If thou ascribest to me rhapsodies, thou dost me great injustice. I may not do credit to my own thoughts and feelings; but never hath my tongue uttered aught to thee, Mercedes, that the heart hath not honestly urged. Have I not loved thee since thou and I were children? Did I ever fail to show my preference for thee when we were boy and girl, in all the sports and light-hearted enjoyments of that guileless period?"

"Guileless, truly," answered Mercedes, her look brightening as it might be with agreeable fancies and a flood of pleasant recollections — doing more, in a single instant, to break down the barriers of her reserve, than years of schooling had effected towards building them up. "Thou wert then, at least, sincere, Luis, and I placed full faith in thy friendship, and in thy desire to please."

"Bless thee, bless thee, for these precious words, Mercedes! for the first time in two years hast thou spoken to me as thou wert wont to do, and called me Luis, without that courtly accursed Don."

"A noble Castilian should never regard his honours lightly, and he oweth it to his rank to see that others respect them too," answered our heroine, looking down, as if she already half repented of the familiarity. "You are quick to remind me of my forgetfulness, Don Luis de Bobadilla."

"This unlucky tongue of mine can never follow the path that its owner wisheth! Hast thou not seen in all my looks—all my acts—all my motives—a desire to please thee, and thee alone, lovely Mercedes? When her Highness gave her royal approbation of my success in the last tourney, did I not seek thine eye, in order to ask if thou noted'st it? Hast thou ever expressed a wish, that I have not proved an eager desire to see it accomplished?"

"Nay, now, Luis, thou emboldenest me to remind thee that I expressed a wish that thou would'st not go on thy last voyage to the north, and yet thou didst depart! I felt that it would displease Doña Beatriz; thy truant disposition having made her uneasy lest thou

should'st get altogether into the habits of a rover, and into disfavour with the Queen."

"It was for this that thou mad'st the request, and it wounded my pride to think that Mercedes de Valverde should so little understand my character, as to believe it possible a noble of my name and lineage could so far forget his duties as to sink into the mere associate of pilots and adventurers."

"Thou didst not know that I believed this of thee."

"Had thou asked'st of me, Mercedes, to remain for thy sake — nay, hadst thou imposed'st the heaviest services on me, as thy knight, or as one who enjoyed the smallest degree of thy favour — I would have parted with life sooner than I would have parted from Castile. But not even a look of kindness could I obtain, in reward for all the pain I had felt on thy account"—

"Pain, Luis!"

"Is it not pain to love to the degree that one might kiss the earth that received the footprint of its object — and yet to meet with no

encouragement from fair words, no friendly glance of the eye, nor any sign or symbol to betoken that the being one hath enshrined in his heart's core, ever thinketh of her suitor except as a reckless rover and a hare-brained adventurer."

"Luis de Bobadilla, no one that really knoweth thy character can ever truly think thus of thee."

"A million of thanks for these few words, beloved girl, and ten millions for the gentle smile that hath accompanied them! Thou might'st mould me to all thy wishes"—

"My wishes, Don Luis!"

"To all thy severe opinions of sobriety and dignity of conduct, would'st thou but feel sufficient interest in me to let me know that my acts can give thee either pain or pleasure."

"Can it be otherwise? Could'st thou, Luis, see with indifference the proceedings of one thou hast known from childhood, and esteemed as a friend?"

"Esteemed! Blessed Mercedes! dost thou own even that little in my favour?"

"It is not little, Luis, to esteem—but much. They who prize virtue never esteem the unworthy; and it is not possible to know thy excellent heart and manly nature without esteeming thee. Surely I have never *concealed* my *esteem* from thee, or from any one else."

"Hast thou *concealed* aught? Ah! Mercedes, complete this heavenly condescension, and admit that one — as lightly as thou wilt — but that one soft sentiment hath, at times, mingled with this esteem."

Mercedes blushed brightly, but she would not make the often-solicited acknowledgment. It was some little time before she answered at all. When she did speak, it was hesitatingly, and with frequent pauses, as if she distrusted the propriety or the discretion of that which she was about to utter.

"Thou hast travelled much and far, Luis," she said, "and hast lost some favour on account of thy roving propensities; why not regain the confidence of thy aunt by the very means through which it has been lost?"

"I do not comprehend thee. This is sin-

gular counsel to come from one like thee, who art prudence itself!"

"The prudent and discreet think well of their acts and words, and are the more to be confided in. Thou seemest to have been struck with these bold opinions of the Señor Colon; and while thou hast derided them, I can see that they have great weight on thy mind."

"I shall henceforth regard thee with tenfold respect, Mercedes; for thou hast penetrated deeper than my foolish affectation of contempt, and all my light language, and discovered the real feeling that lieth underneath. Ever since I have heard of this vast project, it hath indeed haunted my imagination; and the image of the Genoese hath constantly stood beside thine, dearest girl, before my eyes, if not in my heart. I doubt if there be not some truth in his opinions; so noble an idea cannot be wholly false!"

The fine full eye of Mercedes was fastened intently on the countenance of Don Luis; and its brilliancy increased, as some of that latent enthusiasm which dwelt within, kindled and

began to glow at this outlet of the feelings of the soul.

"There *is*," she answered, solemnly—"there *must* be truth in it! The Genoese hath been inspired of Heaven with his sublime thoughts, and he will live, sooner or later, to prove their truth. Imagine this earth fairly encircled by a ship; the farthest east, the land of the heathen, brought in close communion with ourselves, and the cross casting its shadows under the burning sun of Cathay! These are glorious, heavenly anticipations, Luis; and would it not be an imperishable renown to share in the honour of having aided in bringing about so great a discovery?"

"By Heaven! I will see the Genoese as soon as the morrow's sun shall appear, and offer to make one in his enterprise. He shall not need for gold, if that be his only want."

"Thou speakest like a generous, noble-minded, fearless young Castilian, as thou art!" said Mercedes, with an enthusiasm that set at nought the usual guards of her discretion and her habits, "and as becometh Luis de Boba-

dilla. But gold is not plenty with any of us at this moment, and it will surpass the power of an ordinary subject to furnish that which will be necessary. Nor is it meet that any but sovereigns should send forth such an expedition, as there may be vast territories to govern and dispose of should Colon succeed. My powerful kinsman, the Duke of Medina Celi, hath had this matter in close deliberation, and he viewed it favourably, as is shown by his letters to her Highness; but even he conceived it a matter too weighty to be attempted by aught but a crowned head, and he hath used much influence with our mistress to gain her over to the opinion of the Genoese's sagacity. It is idle to think, therefore, of aiding effectually in this noble enterprise, unless it be through their Highnesses."

"Thou knowest, Mercedes, that I can do nought for Colon with the Court. The King is the enemy of all who are not as wary, cold, and as much given to artifice as himself"—

"Luis! thou art in his palace — beneath his roof, enjoying his hospitality and protection at this very moment!"

"Not I," answered the young man, with warmth —"this is the abode of my royal mistress, Doña Isabella; Granada being a conquest of Castile, and not of Aragon. Touching the Queen, Mercedes, thou shalt never hear a disrespectful word from me, for, like thyself, she is all that is virtuous, gentle, and kind in woman; but the King hath many of the faults of us corrupt and mercenary men. Thou canst not tell me of a young, generous, warm-blooded cavalier, even among his own Aragonese, who truly and confidingly loveth Don Fernando; whilst all of Castile adore the Doña Isabella."

"This may be true, in part, Luis, but it is altogether imprudent. Don Fernando is a king, and I fear me, from the little I have seen while dwelling in a court, that they who manage the affairs of mortals must make large concessions to their failings, or human depravity will thwart the wisest measures that can be devised. Moreover, can one truly love the wife and not esteem the husband? To me it seemeth that the tie is so near and dear as to leave the

virtues and the characters of a common identity."

"Surely thou dost not mean to compare the modest piety, the holy truth, the sincere virtue of our royal mistress, with the cautious, wily policy of our scheming master!"

"I desire not to make comparisons between them, Luis. We are bound to honour and obey both; and if Doña Isabella hath more of the confiding truth and pure-heartedness of her sex than his Highness, is it not ever so as between man and woman?"

"If I could really think that thou likenest me, in any way, with that managing and false-faced King of Aragon, much as I love thee, Mercedes, I would withdraw, for ever, in pure shame."

"No one will liken thee, Luis, to the false-tongued or the doubled-faced; for it is thy failing to speak truth when it might be better to say nothing, as witness the present discourse, and to look at those who displease thee as if ever ready to point thy lance, and spur thy charger in their very teeth."

"My looks have been most unfortunate, fair Mercedes, if they have left such memories in thee!" answered the youth, reproachfully.

"I speak not in any manner touching myself; for to me, Luis, thou hast ever been gentle and kind," interrupted the young Castilian girl, with a haste and earnestness that hurried the blood to her cheeks a moment afterwards; "but solely that thou may'st be more guarded in thy remarks on the King."

"Thou began'st by saying that I was a rover"—

"Nay, I have used no such term of reproach, Don Luis; thy *aunt* may have said this; but it could have been with no intent to wound. I said that thou hadst travelled *far* and *much*."

"Well — well — I merit the title, and shall not complain of my honours. Thou saidst that I had travelled *far* and *much*, and thou spokest approvingly of the project of this Genoese. Am I to understand, Mercedes, it is thy wish that I should make one of the adventurers?"

"Such was my meaning, Luis, for I have thought it an emprise fitting thy daring mind and willing sword; and the glory of success would atone for a thousand trifling errors committed under the heat and inconsideration of youth."

Don Luis regarded the flushed cheek and brightened eyes of the beautiful enthusiast nearly a minute, in silent but intense observation; for the tooth of doubt and jealousy had fastened on him, and, with the self-distrust of true affection, he questioned how far he was worthy to interest so fair a being, and had misgivings concerning the motive that induced her to wish him to depart.

"I wish I could read thy heart, Doña Mercedes," he at length resumed; "for while the witching modesty and coy reserve of thy sex serve but to bind us so much the closer in thy chains, they puzzle the understanding of men more accustomed to rude encounters in the field than to the mazes of their ingenuity. Dost thou desire me to embark in an adventure that most men, the wise and prudent Don

Fernando at their head — he whom thou so much esteemest too — look upon as the project of a visionary, and as leading to certain destruction? Did I think this, I would depart to-morrow, if it were only that my hated presence should never more disturb thy happiness."

"Don Luis, you have no justification for this cruel suspicion," said Mercedes, endeavouring to punish her lover's distrust by an affectation of resentment, though the tears struggled through her pride, and fell from her reproachful eyes. "You know that no one here or elsewhere hateth you; you know that you are a general favourite, though Castilian prudence and Castilian reserve may not always view your wandering life with the same applause as they give to the more attentive courtier and rigidly observant knight."

"Pardon me, dearest, most beloved Mercedes, thy coldness and aversion sometimes madden me."

"Coldness! aversion! Luis de Bobadilla! When hath Mercedes de Valverde ever shown either to *thee?*"

"I fear that Doña Mercedes de Valverde is, even now, putting me to some such proof."

"Then thou little knowest her motives, and ill appreciatest her heart. No, Luis, I am not averse, and would not appear cold to *thee*. If thy wayward feelings get so much the mastery, and pain thee thus, I will strive to be more plain. Yes! rather than thou should'st carry away with thee the false notion, and perhaps plunge again into some unthinking sea-adventure, I will subdue my maiden pride, and forget the reserve and caution that best become my sex and rank to relieve thy mind. In advising thee to attach thyself to this Colon, and to enter freely into his noble schemes, I had thine own happiness in view, as thou hast time and again sworn to me, thy happiness *could* only be secured"—

"Mercedes! what mean'st thou? My happiness can only be secured by a union with thee!"

"And thy union with me can only be secured by thy ennobling that besetting propensity to roving, by some act of worthy renown,

that shall justify Doña Beatriz in bestowing her ward on a truant nephew, and gain the favour of Doña Isabella."

"And thou!—would this adventure win thee, too, to view me with kindness?"

"Luis, if thou *wilt* know all, I am won already—nay, restrain this impetuosity, and hear all I have to say. Even while I confess so much more than is seemly in a maiden, thou art not to suppose I can farther forget myself. Without the cheerful consent of my guardian, and the gracious approbation of her Highness, I will wed no man—no, not even *thee*, Luis de Bobadilla, dear as I acknowledge thee to be to my heart"—the ungovernable emotions of female tenderness caused the words to be nearly smothered in tears—"would I wed, without the smiles and congratulations of all who have a right to smile, or weep, for any of the house of Valverde. Thou and I cannot marry like a village hind and a village girl; it is suitable that we stand before a prelate with a large circle of approving friends to grace our union. Ah! Luis, thou hast reproached me with cold-

ness and indifference to thee"—sobs nearly stifled the generous girl—"but others have not been so blind—nay, speak not, but suffer me, now that my heart is overflowing, to unburthen myself to thee entirely; for I fear that shame and regret will come soon enough to cause repentance for what I now confess—but all have not been blind as thou. Our gracious Queen well understandeth the female heart, and that thou hast been so slow to discover, she hath long seen; and her quickness of eye and thought hath alone prevented me from saying to thee earlier, a part at least of that which I now reluctantly confess"—

"How! Is Doña Isabella too my enemy? Have I her Highness's scruples to overcome, as well as those of my cold-hearted and prudish aunt?"

"Luis, thy intemperance causeth thee to be unjust. Doña Beatriz of Moya is neither cold-hearted nor prudish, but all that is the reverse. A more generous or truer spirit never sacrificed self to friendship, and her very nature is frankness and simplicity. Much of that I so love

in thee, cometh of her family, and *thou* should'st not reproach her for it. As for her Highness, certes, it is not needed that I should proclaim her qualities. Thou knowest that she is deemed the mother of her people; that she regardeth the interests of all equally, or so far as her knowledge will allow; and that what she doth for any, is ever done with true affection, and a prudence that I have heard the cardinal say, seemeth to be inspired by infinite wisdom."

"Ay, it is not difficult, Mercedes, to seem prudent, and benevolent, and inspired, with Castile for a throne, and Leon, with other rich provinces, for a footstool!"

"Don Luis, if you would retain my esteem," answered the single-minded girl, with a gravity that had none of her sex's weakness in it, though much of her sex's truth—"speak not lightly of my royal mistress. Whatever she may have done in this matter, hath been done with a mother's feelings and a mother's kindness — thy injustice maketh me almost to apprehend, with a mother's wisdom."

"Forgive me, adored, beloved Mercedes! a

thousand times more adored and loved than ever, now that thou hast been so generous and confiding. But, I cannot rest in peace until I know what the Queen hath said and done, in anything that toucheth thee and me."

"Thou knowest how kind and gracious the Queen hath ever been to me, Luis, and hôw much I have reason to be grateful for her many condescensions and favours. I know not how it is, but, while thy aunt hath never seemed to detect my feelings, and all those related to me by blood have appeared to be in the same darkness, the royal eye hath penetrated a mystery that, at the moment, I do think, was even concealed from myself. Thou rememberest the tourney that took place just before thou left us on thy last mad expedition?"

"Do I not? Was it not thy coldness after my success in that tourney, and when I even wore thy favours, that not only drove me out of Spain, but almost drove me out of the world?"

"If the world could impute thy acts to such a cause, all obstacles would at once be removed,

and we might be happy without further efforts. But," and Mercedes smiled archly, though with great tenderness in her voice and looks, as she added, "I fear thou art much addicted to these fits of madness, and that thou wilt never cease to wish to be driven to the uttermost limits of the world, if not fairly out of it."

"It is in thy power to make me as stationary as the towers of this Alhambra. One such smile, daily, would chain me like a captive Moor at thy feet, and take away all desire to look at other objects than thy beauty. But her Highness — thou hast forgotten to add what her Highness hath said and done."

"In that tourney thou wert conqueror, Luis! The whole chivalry of Castile was in the saddle that glorious day, and yet none could cope with thee! Even Alonzo de Ojeda was unhorsed by thy lance, and all mouths were filled with thy praises; all memories — perhaps it would be better to say that all memories but one, forgot thy failings."

"And that one was thine, cruel Mercedes!"

"Thou knowest better, unkind Luis! That

day I remembered nothing but thy noble, generous heart, manly bearing in the tilt-yard, and excellent qualities. The more mindful memory was the Queen's, who sent for me to her closet when the festivities were over, and caused me to pass an hour with her, in gentle, affectionate discourse, before she touched at all on the real object of her command. She spoke to me, Luis, of our duties as Christians, of our duties as females, and, most of all, of the solemn obligations that we contract in wedlock, and of the many pains that, at best, attend that honoured condition. When she had melted me to tears, by an affection that equalled a mother's love, she made me promise — and I confirmed it with a respectful vow — that I would never appear at the altar, while she lived, without her being present to approve of my nuptials; or, if prevented by disease or duty, at least not without a consent given under her royal signature."

"By St. Denis of Paris! her Highness endeavoured to influence thy generous and pure mind against me!"

"Thy name was not even mentioned, Luis,

nor would it have been in any way concerned in the discourse, had not my unbidden thoughts turned anxiously towards thee. What her Highness meditated, I do not even now know; but it was the manner in which my own sensitive feelings brought up thy image, that hath made me, perhaps idly, fancy the effect might be to prevent me from wedding thee, without Doña Isabella's consent. But, knowing, as I well do, her maternal heart and gentle affections, how can I doubt that she will yield to my wishes, when she knoweth that my choice is not really unworthy, though it may seem to the severely prudent in some measure indiscreet."

"But thou thinkest—thou feelest, Mercedes, that it was in fear of me that her Highness extorted the vow?"

"I apprehended it, as I have confessed with more readiness than became a maiden's pride, because thou wert uppermost in my mind. Then thy triumphs throughout the day, and the manner in which thy name was in all men's mouths, might well tempt the thoughts to dwell on thy person."

"Mercedes, thou canst not deny that thou believest her Highness extorted that vow in dread of me!"

"I wish to deny nothing that is true, Don Luis; and you are early teaching me to repent of the indiscreet avowal I have made. That it was in *dread* of you that her Highness spoke, I do deny; for I cannot think she has any such feelings towards *you*. She was full of maternal affection for *me*, and I think, for I will conceal nought that I truly believe, that apprehension of thy powers to please, Luis, may have induced her to apprehend that an orphan girl, like myself, might possibly consult her fancy more than her prudence, and wed one who seemed to love the uttermost limits of the earth so much better than his own noble castles and his proper home."

"And thou meanest to respect this vow?"

"Luis! thou scarce reflectest on thy words, or a question so sinful would not be put to me! What Christian maiden ever forgets her vows, whether of pilgrimage, penitence, or performance—and why should I be the first to incur

this disgraceful guilt? Besides, had I not vowed, the simple wish of the Queen, expressed in her own royal person, would have been enough to deter me from wedding any. She is my sovereign, mistress, and, I might almost say, mother; Doña Beatriz herself scarce manifesting greater interest in my welfare. Now, Luis, thou must listen to my suit, although I see thou art ready to exclaim, and protest, and invoke; but I have heard thee patiently some years, and it is now my turn to speak and thine to listen. I do think the Queen had thee in her mind on the occasion of that vow, which was *offered* freely by me, rather than *extorted*, as thou seemest to think, by her Highness. I *do* then believe that Doña Isabella supposed there might be a danger of my yielding to thy suit, and that she had apprehensions that one so much given to roving, might not bring, or keep, happiness in the bosom of a family. But, Luis, if her Highness hath not done thy noble, generous heart, justice; if she hath been deceived by appearances, like most of those around her; if she hath not known thee, in

short, is it not thine own fault? Hast thou not been a frequent truant from Castile, and, even when present, hast thou been as attentive and assiduous in thy duties at court, as becometh thy high birth and admitted claims? It is true, her Highness, and all others who were present, witnessed thy skill in the tourney, and in these wars thy name hath had frequent and honourable mention for prowess against the Moor; but while the female imagination yields ready homage to this manliness, the female heart yearneth for other, and gentler, and steadier virtues, at the fireside and in the circle within. This Doña Isabella hath seen, and felt, and knoweth, happy as hath been her own marriage with the King of Aragon; and is it surprising that she hath felt this concern for me? No, Luis; feeling hath made thee unjust to our royal mistress, whom it is now manifestly thy interest to propitiate, if thou art sincere in thy avowed desire to obtain my hand."

"And how is this to be done, Mercedes? The Moor is conquered, and I know not that any knight would meet me to do battle for thy favour."

"The Queen wisheth nothing of this sort—neither do I. We both know thee as an accomplished Christian knight already, and, as thou hast just said, there is no one to meet thy lance, for no one hath met with the encouragement to justify the folly. It is through this Colon that thou art to win the royal consent."

"I believe I have, in part, conceived thy meaning; but would fain hear thee speak more plainly."

"Then I will tell thee in words as distinct as my tongue can utter them," rejoined the ardent girl, the tint of tenderness gradually deepening on her cheek to the flush of a holy enthusiasm, as she proceeded: "Thou knowest already the general opinions of the Señor Colon, and the mode in which he proposeth to effect his ends. I was still a child when he first appeared in Castile, to urge the court to embark in this great enterprise, and I can see that her Highness hath often been disposed to yield her aid, when the coldness of Don Fernando, or the narrowness of her ministers, hath diverted her mind from the object. I think she yet re-

gardeth the scheme with favour; for it is quite lately that Colon, who had taken leave of us all, with the intent to quit Spain and seek elsewhere for means, was summoned to return, through the influence of Fray Juan Perez, the ancient confessor of her Highness. He is now here, as thou hast seen, waiting impatiently for an audience, and it needeth only to quicken the Queen's memory, to obtain for him that favour. Should he get the caravels he asketh, no doubt many of the nobles will feel a desire to share in an enterprise that will confer lasting honour on all concerned, if successful; and thou might'st make one."

"I know not how to regard this solicitude, Mercedes, for it seemeth strange to wish to urge those we affect to value, to enter on an expedition whence they may never return."

"God will protect thee!" answered the girl, her face glowing with pious ardour: "the enterprise will be undertaken for his glory, and his powerful hand will guide and shield the caravels."

Don Luis de Bobadilla smiled, having far less religious faith, and more knowledge of physical obstacles than his mistress. He did full justice to her motives, notwithstanding his hastily expressed doubts; and the adventure was of a nature to arouse his constitutional love of roving, and his desire for encountering dangers. Both he and Mercedes well knew that he had fairly earned no small part of that distrust of his character, which alone thwarted their wishes; and, quick of intellect, he well understood the means and manner by which he was to gain Doña Isabella's consent. The few doubts that he really entertained were revealed by the question that succeeded.

"If her Highness is disposed to favour this Colon," he asked, "why hath the measure been so long delayed?"

"This Moorish war, an empty treasury, and the wary coldness of the King, have prevented it."

"Might not her Highness look upon all the followers of the man as so many vain schemers, should we return without success, as will most

likely be the case — if, indeed, we ever return?"

"Such is not Doña Isabella's character. She will enter into this project in honour of God, if she entereth into it at all; and she will regard all who accompany Colon voluntarily, as so many crusaders, well entitled to her esteem. Thou wilt not return unsuccessful, Luis; but with such credit as will 'cause thy wife to glory in her choice, and to be proud of thy name."

"Thou art a most dear enthusiast, beloved girl! If I could take thee, with me, I would embark in the adventure, with no other companion."

A fitting reply was made to this gallant, and, at the moment certainly, sincere speech, after which the matter was discussed between the two, with greater calmness, and far more intelligibly. Don Luis succeeded in restraining his impatience; and the generous confidence with which Mercedes gradually got to betray her interest in him, and the sweet, holy earnestness with which she urged the probability of success,

brought him at length to view the enterprise as one of lofty objects, rather than as a scheme which flattered his love of adventure.

Doña Beatriz left the lovers alone for quite two hours, the Queen requiring her presence all that time; and soon after she returned, her reckless, roving, indiscreet, but noble-hearted and manly nephew, took his leave. Mercedes and her guardian, however, did not retire until midnight; the former laying open her whole heart to the Marchioness, and explaining all her hopes as they were connected with the enterprise of Colon. Doña Beatriz was both gratified and pained by this confession, while she smiled at the ingenuity of love, in coupling the great designs of the Genoese with the gratification of its own wishes. Still she was not displeased. Luis de Bobadilla was the son of an only and much-beloved brother, and she had transferred to her nephew most of the affection she had felt for the father. All who knew him, indeed, were fond of the handsome and gallant young cavalier, though the prudent felt compelled to frown on his indiscretions; and he

might have chosen a wife, at will, from among the fair and high-born of Castile, with the few occasional exceptions that denote the circumspection and reserve of higher principles than common, and a forethought that extends beyond the usual considerations of marriage. The Marchioness, therefore, was not an unwilling listener to her ward; and ere they separated for the night, the ingenuous but modest confessions, the earnest eloquence, and the tender ingenuity of Mercedes, had almost made a convert of Doña Beatriz.

CHAPTER VI.

Looke back, who list, unto the former ages,
And call to count, what is of them become:
Where be those learned wits and antique sages,
Which of all wisdom knew the perfect somme?
Where those great warriors which did overcome
The world with conquest of their might and maine,
And made one meare of th' earth and of their raigne.

Ruins of Time.

Two or three days had passed before the Christians began to feel at home in the ancient seat of Mahommedan power. By that time, however, the Alhambra and the town got to be more regulated than they were during the hurry, delight, and grief, of taking possession and departing; and as the politic and far from ill-disposed Ferdinand had issued strict orders that the Moors should not only be treated with

kindness, but with delicacy, the place gradually settled down into tranquillity, and men began to fall into their ancient habits and to interest themselves in their customary pursuits.

Don Fernando was much occupied with new cares, as a matter of course; but his illustrious consort, who reserved herself for great occasions, exercising her ordinary powers in the quiet, gentle manner that became her sex and native disposition, her truth and piety, had already withdrawn, as far as her high rank and substantial authority would allow, from the pageantry and martial scenes of a warlike court, and was seeking, with her wonted readiness, the haunts of private affection, and that intercourse which is most congenial to the softer affections of a woman. Her surviving children were with her, and they occupied much of her maternal care; but she had also many hours for friendship, and for the indulgence of an affection that appeared to include all her subjects within the ties of family.

On the morning of the third day that succeeded the evening of the interview related in

the preceding chapter, Doña Isabella had collected about her person a few of those privileged individuals who might be said to have the entrée to her more private hours; for while that of Castile was renowned among Christian courts for etiquette, habits that it had probably derived from the stately oriental usages of its Mahommedan neighbours, the affectionate nature of the Queen had cast a halo around her own private circle, that at once rendered it graceful as well as delightful to all who enjoyed the high honour of entering it. At that day, churchmen enjoyed a species of exclusive favour, mingling with all the concerns of life, and not unfrequently controlling them. While the people of the United States are quick to detect blemishes of this sort among foreign nations, and are particularly prone to point out the evils that have flowed from the meddling of the Romish divines, they verify the truth of the venerable axiom that teaches us how much easier it is to see the faults of others than to discover our own; for no people afford stronger evidences of the existence of this control, than they do, more

especially that portion of them who dwell in places that were originally settled by religionists, and which still continue under the influence of the particular sects that first prevailed; and perhaps the strongest national trait that exists among them at this moment, that of a disposition to extend the control of society beyond the limits set by the institutions and the laws, under the taking and plausible appellation of public opinion, has its origin in the polity of churches of a democratic character, that have aspired to be an *imperium in imperio*, confirmed and strengthened by their modes of government and by provincial habits. Be the fact as it may among themselves, there is no question of the ascendency of the Catholic priesthood throughout Christendom, previously to the reformation; and Isabella was too sincerely devout, too unostentatiously pious, not to allow them every indulgence that comported with her own sense of right, and among others, that of a free access to her presence, and an influence on all her measures.

On the occasion just named, among others

who were present was Fernando de Talavera, a prelate of high station, who had just been named to the new dignity of Archbishop of Granada, and the Fray Pedro de Carrascal, the former teacher of Luis de Bobadilla, an unbeneficed divine, who owed his favour to great simplicity of character, aided by his high birth. Isabella herself was seated at a little table, where she was employed with her needle, the subject of her toil being a task as homely as a shirt for the king, it being a part of her womanly propensities to acquit herself of this humble duty, as scrupulously as if she had been the wife of a common tradesman of her own capital. This was one of the habits of the age, however, if not a part of the policy of Princes; for most travellers have seen the celebrated saddle of the Queen of Burgundy, with a place arranged for the distaff, that, when its owner rode forth, she might set an example of thrift to her admiring subjects; and with our own eyes, in these luxurious times, when few private ladies even condescend to touch anything as useful as the garment that occupied

the needle of Isabella of Castile, we have seen a queen, seated amid her royal daughters, as diligently employed with the needle as if her livelihood depended on her industry. But Doña Isabella had no affectations. In feelings, speech, nature, and acts, she was truth itself; and matrimonial tenderness gave her a deeply felt pleasure in thus being occupied for a husband whom she tenderly loved as a man, while it was impossible she could entirely conceal from herself all his faults as a monarch. Near her sate the companion of her girlish days, the long-tried and devoted Beatriz de Cabrera. Mercedes occupied a stool, at the feet of the Infanta Isabella, while one or two other ladies of the household were placed at hand, with such slight distinctions of rank as denoted the presence of royalty, but with a domestic freedom that made these observances graceful without rendering them fatiguing. The King himself was writing at a table, in a distant corner of the vast apartment; and no one, the newly-created Archbishop not excepted, presumed to approach that side of the room. The discourse

was conducted in a tone a little lower than common, even the Queen, whose voice was always melody, modulating its tones in a way not to interfere with the train of thought into which her illustrious consort appeared to be profoundly plunged. But, at the precise moment that we now desire to present to the reader, Isabella had been deeply lost in reflection for some time, and a general silence prevailed in the female circle around the little work-tables.

"Daughter-Marchioness"—for so the Queen usually addressed her friend—"Daughter-Marchioness," said Isabella, arousing herself from the long silence, "hath aught been seen or heard of late of the Señor Colon, the pilot who hath so long urged us on the subject of this western voyage?"

The quick, hurried glance of intelligence and gratification, that passed between Mercedes and her guardian, betrayed the interest they felt in this question, while the latter answered, as became her duty and her respect for her mistress—

"You remember, Señora, that he was written for, by Fray Juan Perez, your Highness's ancient confessor, who journeyed all the way from his convent of Santa Maria de Rabida, in Andalusia, to intercede in his behalf, that his great designs might not be lost to Castile."

"Thou thinkest his designs then great, Daughter-Marchioness?"

"Can any think them otherwise, Señora? They seem reasonable and natural, and, if just, is it not a great and laudable undertaking to extend the bounds of the Church, and to confer honour and wealth on one's own country? My enthusiastic ward, Mercedes de Valverde, is so zealous in behalf of this navigator's great project, that, next to her duty to her God, and her duty to her sovereigns, it seemeth to make the great concern of her life."

The Queen turned a smiling face towards the blushing girl who was the subject of this remark, and she gazed at her for an instant with the expression of affection that was so wont to illumine her lovely countenance when

dwelling on the features of her own daughters.

Dost thou acknowledge this, Doña Mercedes," she said; "hath Colon so convinced thee, that thou art thus zealous in his behalf?"

Mercedes arose respectfully, when addressed by the Queen, and she advanced a step or two nearer to the royal person before she made any reply.

"It becometh me to speak modestly in this presence," said the beautiful girl; "but I shall not deny that I feel deep concern for the success of the Señor Colon. The thought is so noble, Señora, that it were a pity it should not be just!"

"This is the reasoning of the young and generous-minded; and I confess myself, Beatriz, almost as childish as any on this matter at times — Colon, out of question, is still here?"

"Indeed he is, Señora," answered Mercedes eagerly, and with a haste she immediately repented, for the inquiry was not made directly to herself; "I know of one who hath seen him

as lately as the day the troops took possession of the town."

"Who is that person?" asked the Queen, steadily, but not severely, her eye having turned again to the face of the girl, with an interest that continued to increase as she gazed.

Mercedes now bitterly regretted her indiscretion, and, in spite of a mighty effort to repress her feelings, the tell-tale blood mounted to her temples ere she could find resolution to reply.

"Don Luis de Bobadilla, Señora, the nephew of my guardian, Doña Beatriz," she at length answered; for the love of truth was stronger in this pure-hearted young creature even than the dread of shame.

"Thou art particular, Señorita," Isabella observed calmly, severity seldom entering into her communications with the just-minded and good; "Don Luis cometh of too illustrious a house to need a herald to proclaim his alliances. It is only the obscure that the world doth not trouble itself about. Daughter-Mar-

chioness," relieving Mercedes from a state scarcely less painful than the rack, by turning her eyes towards her friend, "this nephew of thine is a confirmed rover — but I doubt if he could be prevailed on to undertake an expedition like this of Colon's, that hath in view the glory of God and the benefit of the realm."

"Indeed, Señora"—Mercedes repressed her zeal by a sudden and triumphant effort.

"Thou wert about to speak, Doña Mercedes," gravely observed the Queen.

"I crave your Highness's forgiveness. It was improperly, as your own words were not addressed to me."

"This is not the Court of the Queen of Castile, daughter, but the private room of Isabella de Trastamara," said the Queen, willing to lessen the effect of what had already passed. "Thou hast the blood of the Admiral of Castile in thy veins, and art even akin to our Lord the King. Speak freely then."

"I know your gracious goodness to me, Señora, and had nearly forgotten myself under its influence. All I had to say was, that Don

Luis de Bobadilla desireth exceedingly that the Señor Colon might get the caravels he seeketh, and that he himself might obtain the royal permission to make one among the adventurers."

"Can this be so, Beatriz?"

"Luis is a truant, Señora, beyond a question, but it is not with ignoble motives. I have heard him ardently express his desire to be one of Colon's followers, should that person be sent by your Highness in search of the land of Cathay."

Isabella made no reply, but she laid her homely work in her lap, and sat musing in pensive silence for several minutes. During this interval none near her presumed to speak, and Mercedes retired stealthily to her stool, at the feet of the Infanta. At length the Queen arose, and crossing the room, she approached the table where Don Fernando was still busily engaged with the pen. Here she paused a moment as if unwilling to disturb him; but soon laying a hand kindly on his shoulder, she drew his attention to herself. The King, as if con-

scious whence such familiarity could alone proceed, looked round immediately, and rising from his chair, he was the first to speak.

"These Moriscoes need looking to," he said, betraying the direction that his thoughts had so early taken towards the increase of his power—"I find we have left Abdallah many strongholds in the Apulxarras, that may make him a troublesome neighbour, unless we can push him across the Mediterranean"—

"Of this, Fernando, we will converse on some other opportunity," interrupted the Queen, whose pure mind disliked everything that had even an approach to a breach of faith. "It is hard enough for those who control the affairs of men always to obey God and their own consciences, without seeking occasions to violate their faith. I have come to thee on another matter. The hurry of the times, and the magnitude of our affairs, have caused us to overlook the promise given to Colon, the navigator"—

"Still busied with thy needle, Isabella, and for my comfort," observed the King, playing

with the shirt that his royal consort had unconsciously brought in her hand; "few subjects have wives as considerate and kind as thou!"

"Thy comfort and happiness stand next to my duty to God and the care of my people," returned Isabella, gratified at the notice the King of Aragon had taken of this little homage of her sex, even while she suspected that it came from a wish to parry the subject that was then uppermost in her thoughts. "I would do nought in this important concern without thy fullest approbation, if that may be had; and I think it toucheth our royal words to delay no longer. Seven years are a most cruel probation, and unless we are active, we shall have some of the hot-blooded young nobles of the kingdom undertaking the matter as their holiday sports."

"Thou say'st true, Señora, and we will refer the subject at once to Fernando de Talavera yonder, who is of approved discretion, and one to be relied on." As the King spoke he beckoned to the individual named, who immediately approached the royal pair. "Archbishop of

Granada," continued the wily King, who had as many politic arts as a modern patriot intently bent on his own advancement —"Archbishop of Granada, our royal consort hath a desire that this affair of Colon should be immediately inquired into, and reported on to ourselves. It is our joint command that you and others take the matter, before the next twenty-four hours shall pass, into mature consideration and inquiry, and that you lay the result before ourselves. The names of your associates shall be given to you in the course of the day."

While the tongue of Ferdinand was thus instructing the prelate, the latter read in the expression of the monarch's eye, and in the coldness of his countenance, a meaning that his quick and practised wits were not slow in interpreting. He signified his dutiful assent however; received the names of his associates in the commission, of whom Isabella pointed out one or two, and then waited to join in the discourse.

"This project of Colon's is worthy of being

more seriously inquired into," resumed the King, when these preliminaries were settled, "and it shall be our care to see that he hath all consideration. They tell me the honest navigator is a good Christian."

"I think him devoutly so, Don Fernando. He hath a purpose, should God prosper his present undertaking, to join in a new effort to regain the holy sepulchre."

"Umph! Such designs may be meritorious, but ours is the true way to advance the faith, this conquest of our own. We have raised the cross, my wife, where the ensigns of infidelity were lately seen, and Granada is so near Castile, that it will not be difficult to maintain our altars. Such at least are the opinions of a layman, holy prelate, on these matters."

"And most just and wise opinions are they, Señor," returned the Archbishop. "That which can be retained it is wisest to seek, for we lose our labours in gaining things that Providence hath placed so far beyond our control that they do not seem designed for our purposes."

"There are those, my Lord Archbishop," observed the Queen, "who might argue against all attempts to recover the holy sepulchre, hearing opinions like these from so high authority!"

"Then, Señora, they would misconceive that authority," the politic prelate hurriedly replied. "It is well for all Christendom to drive the Infidels from the Holy Land; but for Castile it is better to dispossess them of Granada. The distinction is a very plain one, as every sound casuist must admit."

"This truth is as evident to our reason," added Ferdinand, casting a look of calm exultation out at a window, "as that yonder towers were once Abdallah's, and that they are now our own!"

"Better for Castile!" repeated Isabella, in the tones of one who mused. "For her worldly power better, perhaps, but not better for the souls of those who achieve the deed — surely not better for the glory of God!"

"My much-honoured wife and beloved consort," said the King.

"Señora," added the prelate.

But Isabella walked slowly away, pondering on principles, while the eyes of the two worldlings she left behind her met with a sort of free-masonry that is in much request among those who are too apt to substitute the expedient for the right. The Queen did not return to her seat, but she walked up and down that part of the room which the Archbishop had left vacant when he approached herself and her husband. Here she remained alone for several minutes, even Ferdinand holding her in too much reverence to presume to disturb her meditations uninvited. The Queen several times cast glances at Mercedes, and at length she commanded her to draw near.

"Daughter," said Isabella, who frequently addressed those she loved by this endearing term, "thou hast not forgotten thy freely-offered vow?"

"Next to my duty to God, Señora, I most consider my duty to my sovereign."

Mercedes spoke firmly, and in those tones that seldom deceive. Isabella riveted her eyes

on the pale features of the beautiful girl, and when the words just quoted were uttered, a tender mother could not have regarded a beloved child with stronger proofs of affection.

"Thy duty to God overshadoweth all other feelings, daughter, as is just," answered the Queen: "thy duty to me is secondary and inferior. Still, thou and all others, owe a solemn duty to your sovereign, and I should be unfit for the high trust that I have received from Providence, did I permit any of these obligations to lessen. It is not I that reign in Castile, but Providence, through its humble and unworthiy instrument. My people are my children, and I often pray that I may have heart enough to hold them all. If princes are sometimes obliged to frown on the unworthy, it is but in humble and distant imitation of that Power which cannot smile on evil."

"I hope, Señora," said the girl, timidly, observing that the Queen paused, "I have not been so unfortunate as to displease you; a frown from your Highness would indeed be a calamity."

"Thou? No, daughter; I would that all the maidens of Castile, noble and simple, were of thy truth and modesty, and obedience. But we cannot permit thee to become the victim of the senses. Thou art too well taught, Doña Mercedes, not to distinguish between that which is brilliant and that which is truly virtuous"—

"Señora!" cried Mercèdes, eagerly—then checking herself, immediately, for she felt it was a disrespect to interrupt her sovereign.

"I listen to what thou would'st say, daughter," Isabella answered, after pausing for the frightened girl to continue. Speak freely; thou addressest a parent."

"I was about to say, Señora, that if all that is brilliant is not virtuous, neither is all that is unpleasant to the sight, or what prudence might condemn, actually vicious."

"I understand thee, Señorita, and the remark hath truth in it. Now, let us speak of other things. Thou appearest to be friendly to the designs of this navigator, Colon?"

"The opinion of one, untaught and youthful as I, can have little weight with the Queen of Castile, who can ask counsel of prelates and learned churchmen, besides consulting her own wisdom," Mercedes modestly answered.

"But thou thinkest well of his project; or have I mistaken thy meaning?"

"No, Señora, I *do* think well of Colon's scheme; for to me it seemeth of that nobleness and grandeur that Providence would favour, for the good of man and the advancement of the Church."

"And thou believest that nobles and cavaliers can be found willing to embark with this obscure Genoese, in his bold undertaking?"

The Queen felt the hand that she affectionately held in both her own tremble, and when she looked at her companion she perceived that her face was crimsoned and her eyes lowered. But the generous girl thought the moment critical for the fortunes of her lover, and she rallied all her energies in order to serve his interests.

"Señora, I do," she answered, with a steadi-

ness that both surprised and pleased the Queen, who entered into and appreciated all her feelings; "I think Don Luis de Bobadilla will embark with him; since his aunt hath conversed freely with him on the nature and magnitude of the enterprise, his mind dwelleth on little else. He would be willing to furnish gold for the occasion, could his guardians be made to consent."

"Which any guardian would be very wrong to do. We may deal freely with our own, but it is forbidden to jeopard the goods of another. If Don Luis de Bobadilla persevere in this intention, and act up to his professions, I shall think more favourably of his character than circumstances have hitherto led me to do."

"Señora!"

"Hear me, daughter; we cannot now converse longer on this point, the council waiting my presence, and the King having already left us. Thy guardian and I will confer together, and thou shalt not be kept in undue suspense; but, Mercedes de Valverde"—

"My Lady the Queen"—

"Remember thy vow, daughter. It was freely given, and must not be hastily forgotten."

Isabella now kissed the pale cheek of the girl, and withdrew, followed by all the ladies; leaving the half-pleased and yet half-terrified Mercedes standing in the centre of the vast apartment, resembling a beautiful statue of Doubt.

CHAPTER VII.

He that of such a height hath built his mind,
And reared the dwelling of his thoughts so strong
As neither fear nor hope can shake the frame
Of his resolved powers.

DANIEL.

THE following day the Alhambra was crowded with courtiers as usual; the applicants for favours, those who sought their own, and those who solicited the redress of imaginary wrongs. The antechambers were thronged, and the different individuals in waiting jealously eyed each other, as if to inquire how far their neighbours would be likely to thwart their several views or to advance their wishes. Men bowed, in general, coldly and with distrust; and the few that did directly pass their greetings, met with the elaborated civility that

commonly characterizes the intercourse of palaces.

While curiosity was active in guessing at the business of the different individuals present, and whispers, nods, shrugs of the shoulders, and meaning glances, passed among the old stagers, as they communicated to each other the little they knew, or thought they knew, on different subjects, there stood in the corner of the principal apartment, one, in particular, who might be distinguished from all around him, by his stature, the gravity and dignity of his air, and the peculiar sort of notice that he attracted. Few approached him, and they that did, as they turned their backs, cast those glances of self-sufficiency and ridicule about them, that characterized the vulgar-minded when they fancy that they are deriding or sneering in consonance with popular opinion. This was Columbus, who was very generally regarded by the multitude as a visionary schemer, and who necessarily shared in that sort of contemptuous obloquy that attaches itself to the character. But even the wit and

jokes of the crowd had been expended upon this subject, and the patience of those who danced attendance was getting to be exhausted, when a little stir at the door announced the approach of some new courtier. The manner in which the throng quickly gave way, denoted the presence of some one of high rank, and presently Don Luis de Bobadilla stood in the centre of the room.

"It is the nephew of her Highness's favourite," whispered one.

"A noble of one of the most illustrious families of Castile," said another; "but a fitting associate of this Colon, as neither the authority of his guardians, the wishes of the Queen, nor his high station, can keep him from the life of a vagabond."

"One of the best lances in Spain, if he had the prudence and wisdom to turn his skill to profit," observed a third.

"That is the youthful knight who hath so well deported himself in this last campaign," growled an inferior officer of the infantry, "and who unhorsed Don Alonso de Ojeda in

the tourney; but his lance is as unsteady in its aim, as it is good in the rest. They tell me he is a rover."

As if purposely to justify this character, Luis looked about him anxiously a moment, and then made his way directly to the side of Colon. The smiles, nods, shrugs and half-suppressed whispers that followed, betrayed the common feeling; but a door on the side of the closet opening, all eyes were immediately bent in that direction, and the little interruption just mentioned was as soon forgotten.

"I greet you, Señor," said Luis, bowing respectfully to Columbus. "Since our discourse of last evening I have thought of little besides its subject, and have come hither to renew it."

That Columbus was pleased by this homage, appeared in his eye, his smile, and the manner in which he raised his body, as if full of the grandeur of his own designs; but he was compelled to defer the pleasure that it always gave him to dilate on his enterprise.

"I am commanded hither, noble Señor," he

answered cordially, "by the holy Archbishop of Granada, who, it seemeth, hath it in charge from their Highnesses to bring my affair to a speedy issue, and who hath named this very morning for that purpose. We touch upon the verge of great events; the day is not distant when this conquest of Granada will be forgotten in the greater importance of the mighty things that God hath held in reserve!"

"By San Pedro, my new patron! I do believe you, Señor. Cathay must lie at or near the spot you have named, and your own eyes shall not see it, and its gorgeous stores of wealth, sooner than mine. Remember Pedro de Muños, I pray you, Señor Colon."

"He shall not be forgotten, I promise you, young lord; and all the great deeds of your ancestors will be eclipsed by the glory achieved by their son. But I hear my name called; we will talk of this anon."

"El Señor Christoval Colon!" was called by one of the pages in a loud authoritative voice, and the navigator hurried forward, buoyed up with hope and joy.

The manner in which one so generally regarded with indifference, if not with contempt, had been selected from all that crowd of courtiers, excited some surprise; but as the ordinary business of the antechamber went on, and the subordinates of office soon appeared in the rooms to hear solicitations and answer questions, the affair was quickly forgotten. Luis withdrew disappointed, for he had hoped to enjoy another long discourse with Columbus on a subject which, as it was connected with his dearest hopes, now occupied most of his thoughts. We shall leave him, however, and all in the antechambers, to follow the great nagivator farther into the depths of the palace.

Fernando de Talavera had not been unmindful of his orders. Instead, however, of associating with this prelate men known to be well disposed to listen to the propositions of Columbus, the King and Queen had made the mistake of choosing some six or eight of their courtiers, persons of probity and of good general characters, but who were too little

accustomed to learned research properly to appreciate the magnitude of the proposed discoveries. Into the presence of these distinguished nobles and churchmen was Columbus now ushered, and among them is the reader to suppose him seated. We pass over the customary ceremonies of the introduction, and proceed at once to the material part of the narrative. The Archbishop of Granada was the principal speaker on the part of the commissioners.

"We understand, Señor Colon," continued the prelate, "should you be favoured by their Highnesses' power and authority, that you propose to undertake a voyage into the unknown Atlantic in quest of the land of Cathay and the celebrated island of Cipango?"

"That is my design, holy and illustrious prelate. The matter hath been so often up between the agents of the two sovereigns and myself, that there is little occasion to enlarge on my views."

"These were fully discussed at Salamanca of a verity, where many learned churchmen were of your way of thinking, Señor, though more

were against it. Our Lord the King and our Lady the Queen, however, are disposed to view the matter favourably, and this commission hath been commanded that we might arrange all previous principles, and determine the rights of the respective parties. What force in vessels and equipments do you demand, in order to achieve the great objects you expect, under the blessing of God, to accomplish?"

"You have well spoken, Lord Archbishop, it will be by the blessing of God, and under his especial care, that all will be done, for his glory and worship are involved in the success. With so good an ally of my side, little worldly means will be necessary. Two caravels of light burthen are all I ask, with the flag of the sovereigns, and a sufficiency of mariners."

The commissioners turned towards each other in surprise, and while some saw in the moderate request the enthusiastic heedlessness of a visionary, others detected the steady reliance of faith.

"That is not asking much, truly," observed the prelate, who was among the first; "and,

though these wars have left us of Castile with an exhausted treasury, we could compass that little without the aid of a miracle. The caravels might be found and the mariners levied, but there are weighty points to determine before we reach that concession. You expect, Señor, to be intrusted with the command of the expedition in your own person?"

"Without that confidence I could not be answerable for success. I ask the full and complete authority of an admiral or a sea-commander of their Highnesses. The force employed will be trifling in appearance, but the risks will be great, and the power of the two crowns must completely sustain that of him on whose shoulders will rest the entire weight of the responsibility."

"This is but just, and none will gainsay it. But, Señor, have you thought maturely on the advantages that are to accrue to the sovereigns, should they sustain you in this undertaking?"

"Lord Archbishop, for eighteen years hath this subject occupied my thoughts and em-

ployed my studies both by day and by night. In the whole of that long period have I done little that hath not had a direct bearing on the success of this mighty enterprise. The advantages to all concerned that will flow from it have, therefore, scarce been forgotten."

"Name them, Señor."

"First, then, as is due to his all-seeing and omnipotent protection, glory will be given to the Almighty, by the spreading of his Church and the increase of his worshippers." Fernando de Talavara and all the churchmen present piously crossed themselves, an act in which Columbus himself joined. "Their Highnesses, as is meet, will reap the next advantages, in the extension of their empire and in the increase of their subjects. Wealth will flow in upon Castile and Aragon in a rapid stream, his Holiness freely granting to Christian monarchs the thrones and territories of all infidel princes whose possessions may be discovered, or people converted to the faith through their means."

"This is plausible, Señor," returned the

prelate, "and founded on just principles. His Holiness certainly is intrusted with that power, and hath been known to use it for the glory of God. You doubtless know, Señor Colon, that Don John of Portugal hath paid great attention to these matters already, and that he and his predecessors have probably pushed discovery to the verge of its final limits. His enterprise hath also obtained from Rome certain privileges that may not be meddled with."

"I am not ignorant of the Portuguese enterprise, holy prelate, nor of the spirit with which Don John hath exercised his power. His vessels voyage along the western shore of Africa, and in a direction altogether different from that I propose to take. My purpose is to launch forth at once into the broad Atlantic, and by following the sun towards his place of evening retirement, reach the eastern bounds of the Indies by a road that will lessen the journey many months."

Although the Archbishop and most of his coadjutors belonged to the numerous class of

those who regarded Columbus as a brain-heated visionary, the earnest but lofty dignity with which he thus simply touched upon his projects; the manner in which he quietly smoothed down his white locks when he had spoken, and the enthusiasm that never failed to kindle in his eye, as he dwelt on his noble designs, produced a deep impression on all present, and there was a moment when the general feeling was to aid him to the extent of the common means. It was a singular and peculiar proof of the existence of this transient feeling that one of the commissioners immediately inquired —

"Do you propose, Señor Colon, to seek the court of Prestor John?"

"I know not, noble Señor, that such a potentate hath even an existence," answered Columbus, whose notions had got the fixed and philosophical bias that is derived from science, and who entered little into the popular fallacies of the day, though necessarily subject to much of the ignorance of the age; "I find nothing to establish the truth of there being such a monarch at all, or such territories."

This admission did not help the navigator's cause; for to affirm that the earth was a sphere, and that Prestor John was a creature of the imagination, was abandoning the marvellous to fall back on demonstration and probabilities; a course that the human mind, in its uncultivated condition, is not fond of taking.

"There are men who will be willing to put faith in the truth of Prestor John's power and territories," interrupted one of the commissioners, who was indebted to his present situation purely to King Ferdinand's policy, "who will flatly deny that the earth is round; since we all know that there are kings and territories, and Christians, while we all see that the earth and the ocean are plains."

This opinion was received with an assenting smile by most present, though Fernando de Talavera had doubts of its justice.

"Señor," answered Columbus, mildly, "if all in this world was in truth what it seemeth, confessions would be little needed, and penance would be much lighter."

"I esteem you a good Christian, Señor Colon," observed the Archbishop, sharply.

"I am such as the grace of God, and a weak nature have made me, Lord Archbishop; though I humbly trust that when I shall have achieved this great end, that I may be deemed more worthy of the divine protection, as well as of the divine favour."

"It hath been said that thou deemest thyself especially set apart by Providence for this work."

"I feel that within me, holy prelate, that encourageth such a hope; but I build nought on mysteries that exceed my comprehension."

It would be difficult to say whether Columbus lost or gained in the opinions of his auditors by this answer. The religious feeling of the age was in perfect consonance with the sentiment; but to the churchmen present it seemed arrogant in a humble and unknown layman, even to believe it possible that he could be the chosen vessel, when so many who appeared to have higher claims were rejected.

Still, no expression of this feeling was permitted, for it was then as it is now, he who seemed to rely on the power of God carrying with him a weight and an influence that ordinarily checked rebukes.

"You propose to endeavour to reach Cathay, by means of sailing forth into the broad Atlantic," resumed the Archbishop, "and yet you deny the existence of Prestor John!"

"Your pardon, holy prelate — I do propose to reach Cathay and Cipango in the mode you mention, but I do not absolutely deny the existence of the monarch you have named. For the probability of the success of my enterprise, I have already produced my proofs and reasons, which have satisfied many learned churchmen; but evidence is wanting to establish the last."

"And yet Giovanni di Montecorvino, a pious bishop of our holy church, is said to have converted such a prince to the true faith, nearly two centuries since."

"The power of God can do anything, Lord Archbishop, and I am not one to question the

merits of his chosen ministers. All I can answer to this point, is, to say that I find no scientific or plausible reasons to justify me in pursuing what may prove to be as deceptive as the light which recedes before the hand that would touch it. As for Cathay and its position and its wonders, we have the better established evidence of the renowned Venetians, Marco and Nicolo Polo, who not only travelled in those territories, but sojourned years at the court of their monarch. But, noble gentlemen, whether there is a Prestor John, or a Cathay, there is certainly a limit to the western side of the Atlantic, and that limit I am ready to seek."

The Archbishop betrayed his incredulity, in the upward turn of his eyes; but having his commands from those who were accustomed to be obeyed, and knowing that the theory of Columbus had been gravely heard and reported on, years before, at Salamanca, he determined prudently to keep within his proper sphere, and to proceed at once to that into which it was his duty to inquire.

"You have set forth the advantages that you think may be derived to the sovereigns, should your project succeed, Señor," he said, "and truly they are not light, if all your brilliant hopes may be realized; but it now remaineth to know what conditions you reserve for yourself, as the reward of all your risks and many years of anxious labour."

"All that hath been duly considered, illustrious Archbishop, and you will find the substance of my wishes set forth in this paper, though many of the smaller provisions will remain to be enumerated."

As Columbus spoke he handed the paper in question to Ferdinand of Talavera. The prelate ran his eyes over it hastily at first, but a second time with more deliberation, and it would be difficult to say whether ridicule, or indignation, was most strongly expressed in his countenance, as he deridingly threw the document on a table. When this act of contempt was performed, he turned towards Columbus, as if to satisfy himself that the navigator was not mad.

"Art thou serious in demanding these terms,

Señor," he asked sternly, and with a look that would have caused most men, in the humble station of the applicant, to swerve from their purpose.

" Lord Archbishop," answered Columbus, with a dignity that was not easily disturbed, " this matter hath now occupied my mind quite eighteen years. During the whole of this long period I have thought seriously of little else, and it may be said to have engaged my mind sleeping and waking. I saw the truth early and intensely, but every day seems to bring it brighter and brighter before my eyes. I feel a reliance on success, that cometh from dependence on God. I think myself an agent chosen for the accomplishment of great ends, and ends that will not be decided by the success of this one enterprise. There is more beyond, and I must retain the dignity and the means necessary to accomplish it. I cannot abate, in the smallest degree, the nature or the amount of these conditions."

Although the manner in which these words were uttered lent them weight, the prelate fan-

cied that the mind of the navigator had got to be unsettled by his long contemplation of a single subject. The only things that left any doubt concerning the accuracy of this opinion, were the method and science with which he had often maintained, even in his own presence, the reasonableness of his geographical suppositions; arguments which, though they had failed to convince one bent on believing the projector a visionary, had nevertheless greatly puzzled the listener. Still, the demands he had just read seemed so extravagant, that, for a single instant, a sentiment of pity repressed the burst of indignation to which he felt disposed to give vent.

"How like ye, noble lords," he cried sarcastically, turning to two or three of his fellow-commissioners who had eagerly seized the paper and were endeavouring to read it, all at the same moment, "the moderate and modest demands of the Señor Christoval Colon, the celebrated navigator who confounded the Council of Salamanca! Are they not such as it becometh their Highnesses to accept on bended knees, and with many thanks?"

"Read them, Lord Archbishop," exclaimed several in a breath; "let us first know their nature."

"There are many minor conditions that might be granted as unworthy of discussion," resumed the prelate taking the paper; "but here are two that must give the sovereigns infinite satisfaction. The Señor Colon actually satisfieth himself with the rank of Admiral and Viceroy over all the countries he may discover; and as for gains, one-tenth — the Church's share, my reverend brethren — yea, even one-tenth, one *humble* tenth of the proceeds and customs will content him!"

The general murmur that passed among the commissioners, denoted a common dissatisfaction, and at that instant Columbus had not a true supporter in the room.

"Nor is this all, illustrious nobles, and holy priests," continued the Archbishop, following up his advantage as soon as he believed his auditors ready to hear him — "nor is this all; lest these high dignities should weary their Highnesses' shoulders, and those of their royal

progeny, the liberal Genoese actually consenteth to transmit them to his own posterity, in all time to come; converting the kingdom of Cathay into a realm for the uses of the house of Colon, to maintain the dignity of which, the tenth of all the benefits are to be consigned to its especial care!"

There would have been an open laugh at this sally, had not the noble bearing of Columbus checked its indulgence; and even Ferdinand of Talavera, under the stern rebuke of an eye and mien that carried with them a grave authority, began to think he had gone too far.

"Your pardon, Señor Colon," he immediately and more courteously added; "but your conditions sounded so lofty that they have quite taken me by surprise. You cannot seriously mean to maintain them?"

"Not one jot will I abate, Lord Priest: that much will be my due, and he that consenteth to less than he deserveth, becometh an instrument of his own humiliation. I shall give to the sovereigns an empire that will far exceed in value all their other possessions, and

I claim my reward. I tell you, moreover, reverend prelate, that there is much in reserve, and that these conditions will be needed to fulfil the future."

"These are truly modest proposals for a nameless Genoese!" exclaimed one of the courtiers, who had been gradually swelling with disgust and contempt. "The Señor Colon will be certain of commanding in the service of their Highnesses, and if nothing is done he will have that high honour without cost; whereas, should this most improbable scheme lead to any benefits he will become a Vice-King, humbly contenting himself with the Church's revenue."

This remark appeared to determine the wavering, and the commissioners rose in a body, as if the matter were thought to be unworthy of further discussion. With the view to preserve at least the appearance of impartiality and discretion, however, the Archbishop turned once more toward Columbus, and now, certain of obtaining his ends, he spoke to him in milder tones.

"For the last time, Señor," he said, "I ask if you still insist on these unheard-of terms?"

"On them and on no other," said Columbus, firmly. "I know the magnitude of the services I shall perform, and will not degrade them, will in no manner lessen their dignity by accepting aught else. But, Lord Archbishop, and you too, noble Señor, that treateth my claims so lightly, I am ready to add to the risk of person, life, and name, that of gold. I will furnish one-eighth of the needful sums, if ye will increase my benefits in that proportion."

"Enough — enough," returned the prelate, preparing to quit the room; "we will make our report to the Sovereigns this instant, and thou shalt speedily know their pleasure."

Thus terminated the conference. The courtiers left the room, conversing earnestly among themselves, like men who did not care to repress their indignation; while Columbus, filled with the noble character of his own designs, disappeared in another direction, with the bearing of one whose self-respect was not to

be lessened by clamour, and who appreciated ignorance and narrowness of views too justly to suffer them to change his own high purposes.

Ferdinand of Talavera was as good as his word. He was the Queen's confessor, and, in virtue of that holy office, had at all times access to her presence. Full of the subject of the late interview, he took his way directly to the private apartments of the Queen, and, as a matter of course, was at once admitted. Isabella heard his representations with mortification and regret, for she had begun to set her heart on the sailing of this extraordinary expedition. But the influence of the archbishop was very great, for his royal penitent knew the sincerity and devotedness of his heart.

"This carrieth presumption to insolence, Señora," continued the irritated churchman: "have we not here a mendicant adventurer demanding honours and authority that belong only to God and his anointed, the princes of the earth? Who is this Colon? — a nameless Genoese, without rank, services, or modesty,

and yet doth he carry his pretensions to a height that might cause even a Guzman to hesitate."

"He is a good Christian, holy prelate," Isabella meekly answered, "and seemeth to delight in the service and glory of God, and to wish to favour the extension of his visible and Catholic church."

"True, Señora, and yet may there be deceit in this"—

"Nay, Lord Archbishop, I do not think that deceit is the man's failing, for franker speech and more manly bearing it is not usual to see, even in the most powerful. He hath solicited us for years, and yet no act of meanness may be fairly laid to his charge."

"I shall not judge the heart of this man harshly, Doña Isabella, but we may judge of his actions and his pretensions, and how far they may be suitable to the dignity of the two crowns, freely and without censure. I confess him grave, and plausible, and light of neither discourse nor manner, virtues certainly as the world moveth in courts"— Isabella smiled, but

said nothing, for her ghostly counsellor was wont to rebuke with freedom, and she to listen with humility,—"where the age is not exhibiting its purest models of sobriety of thought and devotion; but even these may exist without the spirit that shall be fitted for heaven. But what are gravity and decorum, if sustained by an inflated pride and inordinate rapacity? ambition being a term too lofty for such a craving. Reflect, Señora, on the full nature of these demands. This Colon requireth to be established, for ever, in the high state of a substitute for a King, not only for his own person, but for those of his descendants throughout all time, with the title and authority of Admiral over all adjacent seas, should he discover any of the lands he so much exalts, before he will consent to enter into the command of certain of your Highnesses' vessels, a station of itself only too honourable for one of so little note! Should his most extravagant pretensions be realized — and the probabilities are that they will entirely fail — his demands would exceed his services; whereas,

in the case of failure, the Castilian and Aragonese names would be covered with ridicule, and a sore disrespect would befal the royal dignity for having been thus duped by an adventurer. Much of the glory of this late conquest would be tarnished by a mistake so unfortunate."

"Daughter-Marchioness," observed the Queen, turning towards the faithful and long-tried friend, who was occupied with her needle near her own side, "these conditions of Colon do truly seem to exceed the bounds of reason."

"The enterprise also exceedeth all the usual bounds of risks and adventures, Señora," was the steady reply of Doña Beatriz, as she glanced towards the countenance of Mercedes. "Noble efforts deserve noble rewards."

The eye of Isabella followed the glance of her friend, and it remained fixed for some time on the pale anxious features of her favourite's ward. The beautiful girl herself was unconscious of the attention she excited; but one who knew her secret might easily detect the intense feeling with which she awaited the

issue. The opinions of her confessor had seemed so reasonable, that Isabella was on the point of assenting to the report of the commissioners, and of abandoning altogether the secret hopes and expectations she had begun to couple with the success of the navigator's schemes, when a gentler feeling, one that belonged peculiarly to her own feminine heart, interposed to give the mariner another chance. It is seldom that woman is dead to the sympathies connected with the affections, and the wishes that sprang from the love of Mercedes de Valverde were the active cause of the decision that the Queen of Castile came to at that critical moment.

"We must be neither harsh nor hasty with this Genoese, Lord Archbishop," she said, turning again to the prelate. "He hath the virtues of devoutness and fair-dealing, and these are qualities that sovereigns learn to prize. His demands, no doubt, have become somewhat exaggerated by long brooding, in his thoughts, on a favourite and great scheme; but kind words and reason may yet lead him

to more moderation. Let him, then, be tried with propositions of our own, and doubtless his necessities, if not a sense of justice, will cause him to accept them. The viceroyalty doth, indeed, exceed the usual policy of princes, and, as you say, holy prelate, the tenth is the Church's share; but the admiral's rank may be fairly claimed. Meet him, then, with these moderated proposals, and substitute a fifteenth for a tenth; let him be a viceroy in his own person, during the pleasure of Don Fernando and myself, but let him relinquish the claim for his posterity."

Fernando de Talavera thought even these concessions too considerable, but, while he exercised his sacred office with a high authority, he too well knew the character of Isabella to presume to dispute an order she had once issued, although it was in her own mild and feminine manner. After receiving a few more instructions, therefore, and obtaining the counsel of the King, who was at work in an adjoining cabinet, the prelate went to execute this new commission.

Two or three days now passed before the subject was finally disposed of, and Isabella was again seated in the domestic circle when admission was once more demanded in behalf of her confessor. The Archbishop entered with a flushed face, and his whole appearance was so disturbed that it must have been observed by the most indifferent person.

"How now, holy Archbishop,"— demanded Isabella,—"doth thy new flock vex thy spirit, and is it so very hard to deal with an infidel?"

"'Tis nought of that, Señora—'tis nought relating to my new people. I find even the followers of the false prophet more reasonable than some who exult in Christ's name and favour. This Colon is a madman, and better fitted to become a saint in Mussulman's eyes, than even a pilot in your Highnesses' service."

At this burst of indignation, the Queen, the Marchioness of Moya, and Doña Mercedes de Valverde, simultaneously dropped their needlework, and sate looking at the prelate with a common concern. They had all hoped that the difficulties which stood in the way of a favour-

able termination to the negotiation would be removed, and that the time was at hand, when the being who, in spite of the boldness and unusual character of his projects, had succeeded in so signally commanding their respect, and in interesting their feelings, was about to depart, and to furnish a practical solution to problems that had as much puzzled their reasons as they had excited their curiosity. But here was something like a sudden and unlooked-for termination to all their expectations; and while Mercedes felt something like despair chilling her heart, the Queen and Doña Beatriz were both displeased.

"Didst thou duly explain to the Señor Colon the nature of our proposals, Lord Archbishop?" the former asked with more severity of manner than she was accustomed to betray; "and doth he still insist on the pretensions to a vice-regal power, and on the offensive condition in behalf of his posterity?"

"Even so, your Highness; were it Isabella of Castile treating with Henry of England or Louis of France, the starving Genoese could

not hold higher terms or more inflexible conditions. He abateth nothing. The man deemeth himself chosen of God, to answer certain ends, and his language and conditions are such as one who felt a holy impulse to his course could scarcely feel warranted in assuming."

"This constancy hath its merit," observed the Queen; "but there is a limit to concession. I shall urge no more in the navigator's favour, but leave him to the fortune that naturally followeth self-exaltation and all extravagance of demand."

This speech apparently sealed the fate of Columbus in Castile. The Archbishop was appeased, and, first holding a short private conference with his royal penitent, he left the room. Shortly after, Christoval Colon, as he was called by the Spaniards—Columbus, as he styled himself in later life—received, for a definite answer, the information that his conditions were rejected, and that the negotiation for the projected voyage to the Indies was finally at an end.

CHAPTER VIII.

Oh! ever thus, from childhood's hour
I've seen my fondest hopes decay;
I never loved a tree or flower,
But 'twas the first to fade away.

Lalla Rookh.

The season had now advanced to the first days of February, and, in that low latitude, the weather was becoming genial and spring-like. On the morning succeeding that of the interview just related, some six or eight individuals, attracted by the loveliness of the day, and induced morally by a higher motive, were assembled before the door of one of those low dwellings of Santa Fé that had been erected for the accommodation of the conquering army. Most of these persons were grave Spaniards of a certain age, though young Luis de Bobadilla was also there, and the tall, dignified form of Columbus was conspicuous in the

group. The latter was equipped for the road, and a stout, serviceable Andalusian mule stood ready to receive its burthen, near at hand. A charger was by the side of the mule, showing that the rider of the last was about to have company. Among the Spaniards were Alonzo de Quintanilla, the Accountant-General of Castile, a firm friend of the navigator, and Luis de St. Angel, the receiver of the ecclesiastical revenues of Aragon, who was one of the firmest converts that Columbus had made to the philosophical accuracy of his opinions and to the truth of his vast conceptions.

The two last had been in earnest discourse with the navigator, but the discussion had closed, and Señor de St. Angel, a man of generous feelings and ardent imagination, was just expressing himself warmly, in the following words —

"By the lustre of the two crowns!" he cried, "this ought not to come to pass. But, adieu, Señor Colon; God have you in his holy keeping, and send you wiser and less prejudiced judges hereafter. The past can only

cause us shame and grief, while the future is in the womb of time."

The whole party, with the exception of Luis de Bobadilla, then took their leave. As soon as the place was clear, Columbus mounted, and passed through the thronged streets, attended by the young noble on his charger. Not a syllable was uttered by either, until they were fairly on the plain, though Columbus often sighed, like a man oppressed with grief. Still his mien was calm, his bearing dignified, and his eye lighted with that unquenchable fire which finds its fuel in the soul within.

When fairly without the gates, Columbus turned courteously to his young companion and thanked him for his escort; but, with a consideration for the other that was creditable to his heart, he added —

"While I am so grateful for this honour, coming from one so noble and full of hopes, I must not forget your own character. Didst thou not remark, friend Luis, as we passed through the streets, that divers Spaniards pointed at me, as the object of scorn?"

"I did, Señor," answered Luis, his cheek glowing with indignation, "and had it not been that I dreaded your displeasure, I would have trodden the vagabonds beneath my horse's feet, failing of a lance to spit them on!"

"Thou hast acted most wisely in showing forbearance. But these are men, and their common judgment maketh public opinion; nor do I perceive that the birth, or the opportunities, causeth material distinctions between them, though the manner of expression vary. There are vulgar among the noble, and noble among the lowly. This very act of kindness of thine, will find its deriders and contemners in the Court of the two Sovereigns."

"Let him look to it, who presumeth to speak lightly of you, Señor, to Luis de Bobadilla! We are not a patient race, and Castilian blood is apt to be hot blood."

"I should be sorry that any man but myself should draw in my quarrel. But, if we take offence at all who think and speak folly, we may pass our days in harness. Let the young

nobles have their jest, if it give them pleasure —but do not let me regret my friendship for thee."

Luis promised fairly, and then, as if his truant thoughts would revert to the subject unbidden, he hastily resumed —

"You speak of the noble as of a class different from your own — surely, Señor Colon, thou art noble?"

"Would it make aught different in thy opinions and feelings, young man, were I to answer no?"

The cheek of Don Luis flushed, and, for an instant, he repented of his remark; but falling back on his own frank and generous nature, he answered immediately, without reservation or duplicity —

"By San Pedro, my new patron! I could wish you were noble, Señor, if it were merely for the honour of the class. There are so many among us who do no credit to their spurs, that we might gladly receive such an acquisition."

"This world is made up of changes, young

Señor," returned Columbus, smiling. "The seasons undergo their changes; night follows day; comets come and go; monarchs become subjects, and subjects monarchs; nobles lose the knowledge of their descent, and plebeians rise to the rank of nobles. 'There is a tradition among us that we were formerly of the privileged class; but time and our unlucky fortune have brought us down to humble employments. Am I to lose the honour of Don Luis de Bobadilla's company in the great voyage, should I be more fortunate in France than I have been in Castile, because his commander happeneth to have lost the evidences of his nobility?"

"That would be a most unworthy motive, Señor, and I hasten to correct your mistake. As we are now about to part for some time I ask permission to lay bare my whole soul to you. I confess that when first I heard of this voyage, it struck me as a madman's scheme"—

"Ah! friend Luis," interrupted Columbus, with a melancholy shake of the head, "this is the opinion of but too many! I fear Don

Ferdinand of Aragon, as well as that stern prelate, his namesake, who hath lately disposed of the question, thinketh in the same manner."

"I crave your pardon, Señor Colon, if I have uttered aught to give you pain; but if I have once done you injustice, I am ready enough to expiate the wrong, as you will quickly see. Thinking thus, I entered into discourse with you, with a view to amuse myself with fancied ravings; but, though no immediate change of opinion followed as to the truth of the theory, I soon perceived that a great philosopher and profound reasoner had the matter in hand. Here my judgment might have rested, and my opinion been satisfied, but for a circumstance of deep moment to myself. You must know, Señor, though come of the oldest blood of Spain, and not without fair possessions, that I may not always have answered the hopes of those who have been charged with the care of my youth"—

"This is unnecessary, noble sir"—

"Nay, by St. Luke! it shall be said. Now, I have two great and engrossing passions, that sometimes interfere with each other. The one is a love for rambling — a burning desire to see foreign lands, and this, too, in a free and roving fashion — with a disposition for the sea and the doings of havens; and the other is a love for Mercedes de Valverde, the fairest, gentlest, most affectionate, warmest-hearted, and truest maiden of Castile!"

"Noble, withal," put in Columbus, smiling.

"Señor," answered Luis, gravely, "I jest not concerning my guardian angel. She is not only noble, and every way fitted to honour my name, but she hath the blood of the Guzmans, themselves, in her veins. But I have lost favour with others, if not with my lovely mistress, in yielding to this rambling inclination; and even my own aunt, who is her guardian, hath not looked smilingly on my suit. Doña Isabella, whose word is law among all the noble virgins of the court, hath also her prejudices, and it hath become necessary to regain her good opinion, to win the Doña

Mercedes. It struck me"—Luis was too manly to betray his mistress by confessing that the thought was hers—"it struck me, that if my rambling tastes took the direction of some noble enterprise, like this you urge, that what hath been a demerit might be deemed a merit in the royal eyes, which would be certain soon to draw all other eyes after them. With this hope, then, I first entered into the present intercourse, until the force of your arguments hath completed my conversion, and now no churchman hath more faith in the head of his religion, than I have that the shortest road to Cathay is athwart the broad Atlantic; or no Lombard is more persuaded that his Lombardy is flat, than I feel convinced that this good earth of ours is a sphere."

"Speak reverently of the ministers of the altar, young Señor," said Columbus, crossing himself, "for no levity should be used in connexion with their holy office. It seemeth, then," he added, smiling, "I owe my disciple to the two potent agents of love and reason; the former, as most potent, overcoming the

first obstacles, and the latter getting uppermost at the close of the affair, as is wont to happen —love, generally, triumphing in the onset, and reason, last."

"I 'll not deny the potency of the power, Señor, for I feel it too deeply to rebel against it. You now know my secret, and when I have made you acquainted with my intentions, all will be laid bare. I here solemnly vow"—Don Luis lifted his cap and looked to heaven, as he spoke—"to join you in this voyage, on due notice, sail from whence you may, in whatever bark you shall choose, and whenever you please. In doing this, I trust, first to serve God and his Church; secondly, to visit Cathay and those distant and wonderful lands; and, lastly, to win Doña Mercedes de Valverde."

"I accept the pledge, young sir," rejoined Columbus, struck by his earnestness, and pleased with his sincerity—"though it might have been a more faithful representation of your thoughts, had the order of the motives been reversed."

"In a few months I shall be master of my own means," continued the youth, too intent on his own purposes to heed what the navigator had said — "and then, nothing but the solemn command of Doña Isabèlla, herself, shall prevent our having one caravel, at least; and the coffers of Bobadilla must have been foully dealt by, during their master's childhood, if they do not afford two. I am no subject of Don Fernando's, but a servant of the elder branch of the House of Trastamara; and the cold judgment of the King, even, shall not prevent it."

"This soundeth generously, and thy sentiments are such as become a youthful and enterprising noble; but the offer cannot be accepted. It would not become Columbus to use gold that came from so confiding a spirit and so inexperienced a head; and there are still greater obstacles than this. My enterprise must rest on the support of some powerful prince. Even the Guzman hath not deemed himself of sufficient authority to uphold a scheme so large. Did we make the discoveries without that sanction, we should be toiling for others, without

security for ourselves, since the Portuguese or some other monarch would wrong us of our reward. That I am destined to effect this great work, I feel, and it must be done in a manner suited to the majesty of the thought and to the magnitude of the subject. And, here, Don Luis, we must part. Should my suit be successful at the court of France, thou shalt hear from me, for I ask no better than to be sustained by hearts and hands like thine. Still, thou must not mar thy fortunes unheedingly, and I am now a fallen man in Castile. It may not serve thee a good turn, to be known to frequent my company any longer — and I again say, here we must part."

Luis de Bobadilla protested his indifference to what others might think; but the more experienced Columbus, who rose so high above popular clamour in matters that affected himself, felt a generous reluctance to permit this confiding youth to sacrifice his hopes to any friendly impressions in his own favour. The leave-taking was warm, and the navigator felt a glow at his heart, as he witnessed the sincere and honest

emotions that the young man could not repress at parting. They separated, however, about half a league from the town, and each bent his way in his own direction; Don Luis de Bobadilla's heart swelling with indignation at the unworthy treatment that there was, in sooth, so much reason for thinking his new friend had received.

Columbus journeyed on with very different emotions. Seven weary years had he been soliciting the monarchs and nobles of Spain to aid him in his enterprise. In that long period, how much of poverty, contempt, ridicule, and even odium, had he not patiently encountered, rather than abandon the slight hold that he had obtained on a few of the more liberal and enlightened minds of the nation! He had toiled for bread while soliciting the great to aid themselves in becoming still more powerful; and each ray of hope, however feeble, had been eagerly caught at with joy, each disappointment borne with a constancy that none but the most exalted spirit could sustain. But he was now required to endure the most grievous of all

his pains. The recal of Isabella had awakened within him a confidence to which he had long been a stranger; and he awaited the termination of the siege with the calm dignity that became his purpose, no less than his lofty philosophy. The hour of leisure had come, and it produced a fatal destruction to all his buoyant hopes. He had thought his motives understood, his character appreciated, and his high objects felt; but he now found himself still regarded as a visionary projector, his intentions distrusted, and his promised services despised. In a word, the bright expectations that had cheered his toil for years had vanished in a day, and the disappointment was all the greater for the brief but delusive hopes produced by his recent favour.

It is not surprising, therefore, that, when left alone on the highway, even the spirit of this extraordinary man grew faint within him, and he had to look to the highest power for succour. His head dropped upon his breast, and one of those bitter moments occurred, in which the past and the future crowd the mind,

painfully as to sufferings endured, cheerlessly as to hope. The time wasted in Spain seemed a blot in his existence, and then came the probability of another long and exhausting probation, that, like this, might lead to nothing. He had already reached the lustrum that would fill his threescore years, and life seemed slipping from beneath him, while its great object remained unachieved. Still the high resolution of the man sustained him. Not once did he think of a compromise of what he felt to be his rights — not once did he doubt of the practicability of accomplishing the great enterprise that others derided. His heart was full of courage even while his bosom was full of grief. "There is a wise, a merciful, and omnipotent God!" he exclaimed, raising his eyes to heaven. "He knoweth what is meet for his own glory, and in him do I put my trust." There was a pause, and the eyes kindled while a scarcely perceptible smile lighted the grave face, and then were murmured the words —"Yea, he taketh his time, but the infidel shall be enlightened, and the blessed sepulchre redeemed!"

After this burst of feeling, that grave-looking man, whose hairs had already become whitened to the colour of snow, by cares, and toils, and exposures, pursued his way, with the quiet dignity of one who believed that he was not created for nought, and who trusted in God for the fulfilment of his destiny. If quivering sighs occasionally broke out of his breast, they did not disturb the placidity of his venerable countenance; if grief and disappointment still lay heavy on his heart, they rested on a base that was able to support them. Leaving Columbus to follow the common mule-track across the Vega, we will now return to Santa Fé, where Ferdinand and Isabella had re-established their court, after the few first days that succeeded the taking possession of their new conquest.

Luis de St. Angel was a man of ardent feelings and generous impulses. He was one of those few spirits who live in advance of their age, and who permitted his reason to be enlightened and cheered by his imagination, though it was never dazzled by it. As he and his friend Alonzo de Quintanilla, after quitting Columbus, as already related, walked towards the

royal pavilion, they conversed freely together concerning the man, his vast conceptions, the treatment he had received, and the shame that would alight on Spain in consequence, were he suffered thus to depart for ever. Blunt of speech, the receiver of the ecclesiastical revenues did not measure his terms, every syllable of which found an echo in the heart of the accountant-general, who was an old and fast friend of the navigator. In short, by the time they reached the pavilion, they had come to the resolution to make one manly effort to induce the Queen to yield to Columbus's terms and to recal him to her presence.

Isabella was always easy of access to such of her servants as she knew to be honest and zealous. The age was one of formality, and, in many respects, of exaggeration, while the Court was renowned for ceremony; but the pure spirit of the Queen threw a truth and a natural grace around all that depended on her, which rendered mere forms, except as they were connected with delicacy and propriety, useless, and indeed impracticable. Both the applicants for the interview enjoyed her favour,

and the request was granted with that simple directness that this estimable woman loved to manifest whenever she thought she was about to oblige any whom she esteemed.

The Queen was surrounded by the few ladies among whom she lived in private, as Luis de St. Angel and Alonzo de Quintanilla entered. Among them, of course, were the Marchioness of Moya and Doña Mercedes de Valverde. The King on this occasion was in an adjoining closet at work, as usual, with his calculations and orders. Official labour was Ferdinand's relaxation, and he seldom manifested more happiness than when clearing off a press of affairs that most men would have found to the last degree burthensome. He was a hero in the saddle, a warrior at the head of armies, a sage in council, and respectable, if not great, in all things but motives.

"What has brought the Señor St. Angel and the Señor Quintanilla as suitors so early to my presence?" asked Isabella, smiling in a way to assure both that the boon would be asked of a partial mistress. "Ye are not wont to be beggars, and the hour is somewhat unusual."

"All hours are suitable, gracious lady, when one cometh to *confer* and not to *seek* favour," returned Luis de St. Angel, bluntly. "We are not here to solicit for ourselves, but to show your Highness the manner in which the crown of Castile may be garnished with brighter jewels than any it now possesseth."

Isabella looked surprised both at the words of the speaker and at his hurried earnestness as well as his freedom of speech. Accustomed however to something of the last, her own calm manner was not disturbed, nor did she even seem displeased.

"Hath the Moor another kingdom of which to be despoiled," she asked, "or would the receiver of the Church's revenues have us war upon the Holy See?"

"I would have your Highness accept the boons that come from God with alacrity and gratitude, and not reject them unthankfully," returned de St. Angel, kissing the Queen's offered hand with a respect and affection that neutralized the freedom of his words. "Do you know, my gracious mistress, that the Señor

Christoval Colon, he from whose high projects we Spaniards have hoped so much, hath actually taken mule and quitted Santa Fé?"

"I expected as much, Señor, though I was not apprised that it had actually come to pass. The King and I put the matter into the hands of the Archbishop of Granada, with other trusty counsellors, and they have found the terms of the Genoese arrogant; so full of exceeding and unreasonable extravagance, that it ill befitted our dignity and our duty to ourselves to grant them. One who hath a scheme of such doubtful results, ought to manifest moderation in his preliminaries. Many even believe the man a visionary."

"It is unlike an unworthy pretender, Señora, to abandon his hopes before he will yield his dignity. This Colon feeleth that he is treating for empires, and he negotiates like one full of the importance of his subject."

"He that lightly valueth himself in matters of gravity, hath need to expect that he will not stand high in the estimation of others," put in Alonzo de Quintanilla.

"And moreover, my gracious and beloved mistress," added de St. Angel, without permitting Isabella even to answer, "the character of the man, and the value of his intentions, may be appreciated by the price he setteth on his own services. If he succeed, will not the discovery eclipse all others that have been made since the creation of the world? Is it nothing to circle the earth, to prove the wisdom of God by actual experiment, to follow the sun in its daily track, and imitate the motions of that glorious moving mass? And then the benefits that will flow on Castile and Aragon — are they not incalculable? I marvel that a princess who hath shown so high and rare a spirit on all other occasions, should shrink from so grand an enterprise as this!"

"Thou art earnest, my good de St. Angel," returned Isabella, with a smile that betrayed no anger, "and when there is much earnestness there is sometimes much forgetfulness. If there were honour and profit in success, what would there be in failure? Should the King and myself send out this Colon with a

commission to be our viceroy for ever over undiscovered lands, and no lands be discovered, the wisdom of our councils might be called in question, and the dignity of the two crowns would be fruitlessly and yet deeply committed."

"The hand of the Lord Archbishop is in this! This prelate hath never been a believer in the justice of the navigator's theories, and it is easy to raise objections when the feelings lean against an enterprise. No glory is obtained without risk. Look, your Highness, at our neighbours the Portuguese—how much have discoveries done for that kingdom, and how much more may it do for us! We know, my honoured mistress, that the earth is round"—

"Are we quite certain of that important fact, Señor?" asked the King, who, attracted by the animated and unusual tones of the speaker, had left his closet, and approached unseen. "Is that truth established? Our doctors at Salamanca were divided on that

great question, and, by Saint James! I do not see that it is so very clear."

"If not round, my Lord the King," answered de St. Angel, turning quickly to face this new opponent, like a well-drilled corps wheeling into a new front, "of what form *can* it be? Will any doctor, come he of Salamanca or come he from elsewhere, pretend that the earth is a plain, and that it hath limits, and that one may stand on these limits and jump down upon the sun as he passeth beneath at night — is this reasonable, honoured Señor, or is it in conformity with Scripture?"

"Will any one, doctor of Salamanca or elsewhere," rejoined the King gravely, though it was evident his feelings were little interested in the discussion, "allege that there are nations who for ever walk with their heads downwards, where the rain falleth upwards, and where the sea remaineth in its bed, though its support cometh from above, and is not placed beneath?"

"It is to explain these great mysteries, Señor Don Fernando, my gracious master, that

I would have this Colon at once go forth. We may see, nay, we have demonstration that the earth is a sphere, and yet we do not see that the waters fall from its surface anywhere. The hull of a ship is larger then her top-masts, and yet the last are first visible on the ocean, which proveth that the body of the vessel is concealed by the form of the water. This being so, and all who have voyaged on the ocean know it to be thus, why doth not the water flow into a level, here, on our own shores? If the earth be round, there must be means to encircle it by water as well as by land—to complete the entire journey, as well as to perform a part. Colon proposeth to open the way to this exploit, and the monarch that shall furnish the means will live in the memories of our descendants as one far greater than a conqueror. Remember, illustrious Señor, that all the East is peopled with infidels, and that the head of the Church freely bestoweth their lands on any Christian monarch that may drag them from their benighted condition into the light of God's favour. Believe me, Doña Isa-

bella, should another sovereign grant the terms Colon requireth, and reap the advantages that are likely to flow from such discoveries, the enemies of Spain would make the world ring with their songs of triumph, while the whole peninsula would mourn over this unhappy decision."

"Whither hath the Señor Colon sped?" demanded the King quickly, all his political jealousies being momentarily aroused by the remarks of his receiver-general; "he hath not gone again to Dom Joao of Portugal?"

"No, Señor, my master, but to King Louis of France, a sovereign whose love for Aragon amounteth to a proverb."

The King muttered a few words between his teeth, and he paced the apartment to and fro with a disturbed manner; for while no man living cared less to hazard his means without the prospect of a certain return, the idea of another's reaping an advantage that had been neglected by himself, brought him at once under the control of those feelings that always influenced his cold and calculating policy.

With Isabella the case was different. Her pious wishes had ever leaned towards the accomplishment of Columbus's great project, and her generous nature had sympathized deeply with the noble conception, vast moral results, and the glory of the enterprise. Nothing but the manner in which her mind, as well as her religious aspirations had been occupied by the war in Granada, had prevented her from entering earlier into a full examination of the navigator's views; and she had yielded to the counsel of her confessor in denying the terms demanded by Columbus, with a reluctance it had not been easy to overcome. Then the gentler feelings of her sex had their influence; for, while she too reflected on what had just been urged, her eye glanced around the room and rested on the beautiful face of Mercedes, who sate silent from diffidence, but whose pale eloquent countenance betrayed all the pleadings of the pure enthusiastic love of woman.

"Daughter-Marchioness," asked the Queen, turning as usual to her tried friend, in her doubts, "what thinkest thou of this weighty

matter? Ought we so to humble ourselves as to recal this haughty Genoese?"

"Say not haughty, Señora, for to me he seemeth much superior to any such feeling; but rather regard him as one that hath a just appreciation of that he hath in view. I agree fully with the receiver-general, in thinking that Castile will be much discredited, if, in sooth, a new world should be discovered, and they who favoured the enterprise could point to this Court, and remind it that the glory of the event was in its grasp, and that it threw it away, heedlessly."—

"And this, too, on a mere point of dignity, Señora," put in St. Angel —"on a question of parchment and of sound."

"Nay, nay,"— retorted the Queen —"there are those who think the honours claimed by Colon would far exceed the service, even should the latter equal all the representations of the Genoese, himself."

"Then, my honoured mistress, they know not at what the Genoese aims. Reflect, Señora, that it will not be an every-day deed to prove

that this earth is a sphere, by actual measurement, whatever we may know in theories. Then cometh the wealth and benefits of those eastern possessions, a quarter of the world whence all riches flow — spices, pearls, silks, and the most precious metals. After these, again, cometh the great glory of God, which crowneth and exceedeth all!"

Isabella crossed herself, her cheek flushed, her eye kindled, and her matronly but fine form seemed to tower with the majesty of the feelings that these pictures created.

"I do fear, Don Fernando," she said "that our advisers have been precipitate, and that the magnitude of this project may justify more than common conditions!"

But the King entered little into the generous emotions of his royal consort; feeling far more keenly the stings of political jealousy, than any promptings of a liberal zeal for either the Church or science. He was generally esteemed a wise prince, a title that would seem to infer neither a generous nor a very just one. He smiled at the kindling enthusiasm of his wife,

but continued to peruse a paper that had just been handed to him by a secretary.

"Your Highness feels as Doña Isabella of Castile ought to feel when the glory of God and the honour of her crown are in question," added Beatriz de Cabrera, using that freedom of speech that her royal mistress much encouraged in their more private intercourse. "I would rather hear you utter the words of recal to this Colon, than again listen to the shouts of our late triumph over the Moor."

"I know that thou lovest me, Beatriz!" exclaimed the Queen: "if there is not a true heart in that breast of thine, the fallen condition of man does not suffer the gem to exist!"

"We all love and reverence your Highness," continued de St. Angel, and we wish nought but your glory. Fancy, Señora, the page of history open, and this great exploit of the reduction of the Moor, succeeded by the still greater deed of a discovery of an easy and swift communication with the Indies, the spread of the Church, and the flow of inexhaustible wealth into Spain! This Colon cannot be supported

by the colder and more selfish calculations of man, but his very enterprise seeks the more generous support of her who can risk much for God's glory and the good of the Church."

"Nay, Señor de St. Angel, thou flatterest and offendest in the same breath."

"It is an honest nature pouring out its disappointment, my beloved mistress, and a tongue that hath become bold through much zeal for your Highnesses' fame. Alas! alas! should King Louis grant the terms we have declined, poor Spain will never lift her head again for very shame!"

"Art certain, St. Angel, that the Genoese hath gone for France?" suddenly demanded the King, in his sharp authoritative voice.

"I have it, your Highness, from his own mouth. Yes, yes, he is at this moment striving to forget our Castilian dialect, and endeavouring to suit his tongue to the language of the Frenchman. They are bigots and unreflecting disciples of musty prejudices, Señora, that deny the theories of Colon. The old philosophers have reasoned in the same manner; and though

it may seem to the timid an audacious and even a heedless adventure to sail out into the broad Atlantic, had not the Portuguese done it he would never have found his islands. God's truth! it maketh my blood boil, when I bethink me of what these Lusitanians have done, while we of Aragon and Castile have been tilting with the Infidels for a few valleys and mountains, and contending for a capital!"

"Señor, you are forgetful of the honour of the sovereigns, as well as of the service of God," interrupted the Marchioness of Moya, who had the tact to perceive that the receiver-general was losing sight of his discretion, in the magnitude of his zeal. "This conquest is one of the victories of the Church, and will add lustre to the two crowns, in all future ages. The head of the Church, himself, hath so recognized it, and all good Christians should acknowledge its character."

"It is not that I undervalue this success, but that I consider the conquest that Colon is likely to achieve over so many millions, that I have thus spoken, Doña Beatriz."

The Marchioness, whose spirit was as marked as her love for the Queen, made a sharp reply, and, for a few minutes, she and Luis de St. Angel, with Alonzo de Quintanilla, maintained the discussion, by themselves, while Isabella conversed apart with her husband, no one presuming to meddle with their private conference. The Queen was earnest and evidently much excited, but Ferdinand maintained his customary coolness and caution, though his manner was marked with that profound respect which the character of Isabella had early inspired, and which she succeeded in maintaining throughout her married life. This was a picture familiar to the courtiers, one of the sovereigns being as remarkable for his wily prudence, as was the other for her generous and sincere ardour, whenever impelled by a good motive. This divided discourse lasted half an hour, the Queen occasionally pausing to listen to what was passing in the other group, and then recurring to her own arguments with her husband.

At length, Isabella left the side of Ferdi-

nand, who coldly resumed the perusal of a paper, and she moved slowly towards the excited party, that was now unanimous and rather loud in the expression of its regrets — loud, for even the indulgence of so gentle a mistress. Her intention to repress this ardour by her own presence, however, was momentarily diverted from its object, by a glimpse of the face of Mercedes, who sate alone, her work lying neglected in her lap, listening anxiously to the opinions that had drawn all her companions to the general circle.

"Thou takest no part in this warm discussion, child," observed the Queen, stopping before the chair of our heroine, and gazing an instant into her eloquently expressive face. "Hast thou lost all interest in Colon?"

"I speak not, Señora, because it becometh youth and ignorance to be modest; but though silent, I *feel* none the less."

"And what are thy feelings, daughter? Dost thou, too, think the services of the Genoese cannot be bought at too high a price?"

"Since your Highness doth me this honour," answered the lovely girl, the blood gradually flushing her pale face, as she warmed with the subject — "I will not hesitate to speak. I do believe this great enterprise hath been offered to the sovereigns, as a reward for all that they have done and endured for religion and the Church. I do think Colon hath been guided to this Court by a Divine hand, and, by a Divine hand hath he been kept here, enduring the long servitude of seven years, rather than abandon his object; and I do think that this late appeal in his favour cometh of a power and spirit that should prevail."

"Thou art an enthusiast, daughter, more especially in this cause," returned the Queen, smiling kindly on the blushing Mercedes. "I am greatly moved by thy wishes to aid in this enterprise!"

Thus spoke Isabella, at a moment when she had neither the leisure nor the thought to analyze her own feelings, which were influenced by a variety of motives, rather than by any

single consideration. Even this passing touch of woman's affections, however, contributed to give her mind a new bias, and she joined the group, which respectfully opened as she advanced, greatly disposed to yield to de St. Angel's well-meant though somewhat intemperate entreaties. Still she hesitated; for her wary husband had just been reminding her of the exhausted state of the two treasuries, and the impoverished condition in which both crowns had been left by the late war.

"Daughter-Marchioness," said Isabella, slightly answering the reverences of the circle, "dost thou still think this Colon expressly called of God, for the high purposes to which he pretendeth?"

"Señora, I say not exactly that, though I believe the Genoese hath some such opinion of himself. But this much I do think — that Heaven beareth in mind its faithful servitors, and when there is need of important actions, suitable agents are chosen for the work. Now, we do know that the Church, at some day, is to prevail throughout the whole world; and

why may not this be the allotted time, as well as another? God ordereth mysteriously, and the very adventure that so many of the learned have scoffed at, may be intended to hasten the victory of the Church. We should remember, your Highness, the humility with which this Church commenced; how few of the seemingly wise lent it their aid; and the high pass of glory to which it hath reached. This conquest of the Moor savoureth of a fulfilment of time, and his reign of seven centuries terminated may merely be an opening for a more glorious future."

Isabella smiled upon her friend, for this was reasoning after her own secret thoughts; but her greater acquirements rendered her more discriminating in her zeal, than was the case with the warm-hearted and ardent Marchioness.

"It is not safe to affix the seal of Providence to this or that enterprise, Daughter-Marchioness"— she answered—"and the Church alone may say what are intended for miracles, and what is left for human agencies. What sum doth Colon need, Señor de St. Angel, to carry

on the adventure in a manner that will content him ?."

" He asketh but two light caravels, my honoured mistress, and three thousand crowns —a sum that many a young spendthrift would waste on his pleasures, in a few short weeks."

" It is not much, truly," observed Isabella, who had been gradually kindling with the thoughts of the nobleness of the adventure; " but, small as it is, my Lord the King doubteth if our joint coffers can, at this moment, well bear the drain."

" Oh ! it were a pity that such an occasion to serve God, such an opportunity to increase the Christian sway, and to add to the glory of Spain, should be lost for this trifle of gold !" exclaimed Doña Beatriz.

" It would be, truly," rejoined the Queen, whose cheek now glowed with an enthusiasm little less obvious than that which shone so brightly in the countenance of the ardent Mercedes. " Señor de St. Angel, the King cannot be prevailed on to enter into this affair, in behalf of Aragon; but I take it on myself, as

Queen of Castile, and, so far as it may properly advance human interests, for the benefit of my own much-beloved people. If the royal treasury be drained, my private jewels should suffice for that small sum, and I will freely pledge them as surety for the gold, rather than let this Colon depart without putting the truth of his theories to the proof. The result, truly, is of too great magnitude to admit of further discussion."

An exclamation of admiration and delight escaped those present, for it was not a usual thing for a princess to deprive herself of personal ornaments in order to advance either the interests of the Church or those of her subjects. The receiver-general, however, soon removed all difficulties on the score of money, by saying that his coffers could advance the required sum, on the guarantee of the crown of Castile, and that the jewels so freely offered might remain in the keeping of their royal owner.

"And now to recal Colon," observed the Queen, as soon as these preliminaries had been discussed. "He hath already departed, you

say, and no time should be lost in acquainting him with this new resolution."

"Your Highness hath here a willing courier, and one already equipped for the road, in the person of Don Luis de Bobadilla," cried Alonzo de Quintanilla, whose eye had been drawn to a window by the trampling of a horse's foot; "and the man who will more joyfully bear these tidings to the Genoese, cannot be found in Santa Fé."

"'Tis scarce a service suited to one of his high station," answered Isabella, doubtingly; "and yet we should consider every moment of delay a wrong to Colon."

"Nay, Señora, spare not my nephew," eagerly interposed Doña Beatriz; "he is only too happy at being employed in doing your Highness's pleasure."

"Let him, then, be summoned to our presence, without another instant's delay. I scarce seem to have decided, while the principal personage of the great adventure is journeying from the court.

A page was immediately despatched in quest

of the young noble, and in a few minutes the footsteps of the latter were heard in the antechamber. Luis entered the presence, flushed, excited, and with feelings not a little angered, at the compelled departure of his new friend. He did not fail to impute the blame of this occurrence to those who had the power to prevent it; and when his dark expressive eye met the countenance of his sovereign, had it been in her power to read its meaning, she would have understood that he viewed her as a person who had thwarted his hopes on more than one occasion. Nevertheless, the influence of Doña Isabella's pure character and gentle manners was seldom forgotten by any who were permitted to approach her person; and his address was respectful, if not warm.

"It is your Highness's pleasure to command my presence," said the young man, as soon as he made his reverences to the Queen.

"I thank you for this promptitude, Don Luis, having some need of your services. Can you tell us what hath befel the Señor Christoval Colon, the Genoese navigator, with

whom, they inform me, you have some intimacy?"

"Forgive me, Señora, if aught unbecoming escape me; but a full heart must be opened lest it break. The Genoese is about to shake the dust of Spain from his shoes, and, at this moment, is on his journey to another court, to proffer those services that this should never have rejected."

"It is plain, Don Luis, that all thy leisure time hath not been passed in courts," returned the Queen, smiling; "but we have now service for thy roving propensities. Mount thy steed, and pursue the Señor Colon with the tidings that his conditions will be granted, and a request that he will forthwith return. I pledge my royal word, to send him forth on this enterprise with as little delay as the necessary preparations and a suitable prudence will allow."

"Señora!—Doña Isabella!—My gracious Queen!—Do I hear aright?"

"As a sign of the fidelity of thy senses, Don Luis, here is the pledge of my hand."

This was said kindly, and the gracious manner in which the hand was offered, brought a gleam of hope to the mind of the lover, which it had not felt since he had been apprized that the Queen's good opinion was necessary to secure his happiness. Kneeling respectfully, he kissed the hand of his sovereign, after which, without changing his attitude, he desired to know if he should that instant depart on the duty she had named.

"Rise, Don Luis, and lose not a moment to relieve the loaded heart of the Genoese—I might almost say, to relieve ours also; for, Daughter-Marchioness, since this holy enterprise hath broken on my mind with a sudden and almost miraculous light, it seemeth that a mountain must lie on my breast until the Señor Christoval shall learn the truth!"

Luis de Bobadilla did not wait a second bidding, but hurried from the presence, as fast as etiquette would allow, and the next minute he was in the saddle. At his appearance, Mercedes had shrunk into the recess of a window, where she now, luckily, commanded

a view of the court. As her lover gained his seat, he caught a glimpse of her form; and though the spurs were already in his charger's flanks, and the rein tightened, the snorting steed was thrown suddenly on his haunches. So elastic are the feelings of youth, so deceptive and flattering the hopes of those who love, that the glances which were exchanged were those of mutual delight. Neither thought of all the desperate chances of the contemplated voyage, of the probability of its want of success, or of the many motives which might still induce the Queen to withhold her consent. Mercedes awoke first from the short trance that succeeded; for, taking the alarm at Luis's indiscreet delay, she motioned him hurriedly to proceed. Again the rowels were buried in the flanks of the noble animal; fire flashed beneath his armed heels, and the next minute Don Luis de Bobadilla had disappeared.

In the mean time, Columbus had pursued his melancholy journey across the Vega. He travelled slowly, and several times, even after his companion had left him, did he check

his mule, and sit, with his head dropped upon his breast, lost in thought, the very picture of woe. The noble resignation that he manifested in public, nearly gave way in private, and he felt, indeed, how hard his disappointments were to be borne. In this desultory manner of travelling he had reached the celebrated pass of the bridge of Piños, the scene of many a sanguinary combat, when the sound of a horse's hoofs first overtook his ear. Turning his head, he recognised Luis de Bobadilla in hot pursuit, with the flanks of his horse dyed in blood, and his breast white with foam.

"Joy! joy! a thousand times, joy, Señor Colon!" shouted the eager youth, even before he was near enough to be distinctly heard. "Blessed Maria be praised! Joy! Señor, joy! and nought but joy!"

"This is unexpected, Don Luis," exclaimed the navigator. "What meaneth thy return?"

Luis now attempted to explain his errand, but eagerness and the want of breath rendered his ideas confused and his utterance broken and imperfect.

"And why should I return to a hesitating, cold, and undecided court?" demanded Columbus. "Have I not wasted years in striving to urge it to its own good? Look at these hairs, young Señor, and remember that I have lost a time that nearly equals all thy days, in striving uselessly to convince the rulers of this peninsula that my project is founded on truth."

"At length you have succeeded. Isabella, the true-hearted and never-deceiving Queen of Castile, herself, hath awoke to the importance of thy scheme, and pledges her royal word to favour it."

"Is this true? *Can* this be true, Don Luis?"

"I am sent to you express, Señor, to urge your immediate return."

"By whom, young Lord?"

"By Dona Isabella, my gracious mistress, through her own personal commands."

"I cannot forego a single condition already offered."

"It is not expected, Señor. Our excellent and generous mistress granteth all you ask,

and hath nobly offered, as I learn, to pledge her private jewels, rather than that the enterprise fail."

Columbus was deeply touched with this information; and removing his cap, he concealed his face with it, for a moment, as if ashamed to betray the weakness that came over him. When he uncovered his face it was radiant with happiness, and every doubt appeared to have vanished. Years of suffering were forgotten in that moment of joy, and he immediately signified his readiness to accompany the youth back to Santa Fé.

CHAPTER IX.

How beautiful is genius when combined
With holiness! Oh! how divinely sweet
The tones of earthly harp, whose chords are touch'd
By the soft hand of Piety, and hung
Upon Religion's shrine, there vibrating
With solemn music in the ear of God!

JOHN WILSON.

COLUMBUS was received by his friends Luis de St. Angel and Alonzo de Quintanilla, with a gratification they found it difficult to express. They were loud in their eulogiums on Isabella, and added to the assurances of Don Luis, such proofs of the seriousness of the Queen's intentions as to remove all doubts from the mind of the navigator. He was then, without further delay, conducted to the presence.

"Señor Colon," said Isabella, as the Genoese advanced and knelt at her feet, "you are wel-

come back, again. All our misunderstandings are finally removed, and henceforth, I trust that we shall act cheerfully and unitedly to produce the same great end. Rise, Señor, and receive this as a gage of my support and friendship."

Columbus saluted the offered hand, and arose from his knees. At that instant, there was probably no one present whose feelings were not raised to the buoyancy of hope; for it was a peculiarity connected with the origin and execution of this great enterprise, that after having been urged for so long a period, amid sneers, and doubts, and ridicule, it was at first adopted with something very like enthusiasm.

"Señora," returned Columbus, whose grave aspect and noble mien contributed not a little to the advancement of his views—"Señora, my heart thanks you for this kindness—so welcome because so little hoped for, this morning—and God will reward it. We have great things in reserve, and I devoutly wish we may be all found equal to our several duties. I

hope my Lord the King will not withhold from my undertaking the light of his gracious countenance."

"You are a servitor of Castile, Señor Colon, though little is attempted for even this kingdom, without the approbation and consent of the King of Aragon. Don Fernando hath been gained over to our side, though his greater caution and superior wisdom have not as easily fallen into the measure, as woman's faith and woman's hopes."

"I ask no higher wisdom, no truer faith, than those of Isabella," said the navigator, with a grave dignity that rendered the compliment so much the more acceptable, by giving it every appearance of sincerity. "Her known prudence shall turn from me the derision of the light-minded and idle, and on her royal word I place all my hopes. Henceforth, and I trust for ever, I am your Highness's subject and servant."

The Queen was deeply impressed with the air of lofty truth that elevated the thoughts and manners of the speaker. Hitherto, she had

seen but little of the navigator, and never, before, under circumstances that enabled her so thoroughly to feel the influence of his air and deportment. Columbus had not the finish of manner that it is fancied courts only can bestow, and which it would be more just to refer to lives devoted to habits of pleasing; but the character of the man shone through the exterior, and, in his case, all that artificial training could supply fell short of the noble aspect of nature, sustained by high aspirations. To a commanding person, and a gravity that was heightened by the loftiness of his purposes, Columbus added the sober earnestness of a deeply seated and an all-pervading enthusiasm, which threw the grace of truth and probity on what he said and did. No quality of his mind was more apparent than its sense of right, as right was then considered in connection with the opinions of the age; and it is a singular circumstance that the greatest adventure of modern times was thus confided by Providence, as it might be with especial objects, to the care of a sovereign and to the hands of an executive

leader, who were equally distinguished by the possession of so rare a characteristic.

"I thank you, Señor, for this proof of confidence," returned the Queen, both surprised and gratified; "and so long as God giveth me power to direct, and knowledge to decide, your interests, as well as those of this long-cherished scheme, shall be looked to. But we are not to exclude the King from our confederacy, since he hath been finally gained to our opinions, and no doubt now as anxiously looketh forward to success as we do ourselves."

Columbus bowed his acquiescence, and the conjugal affection of Isabella was satisfied with this concession to her husband's character and motives; for, while it was impossible that one so pure and ardent in the cause of virtue, and as disinterested as the Queen, should not detect some of the selfishness of Ferdinand's cautious policy, the feelings of a wife so far prevailed in her breast, over the sagacity of the sovereign, as to leave her blind to faults that the enemies of Aragon were fond of dwelling on. All admitted the truth of Isabella, but Ferdinand had

far less credit with his contemporaries, either on the score of faith or on that of motives. Still he might have been ranked among the most upright of the reigning princes of Europe, his faults being rendered the more conspicuous, perhaps, from being necessarily placed in such close connection with, and in such vivid contrast to, the truer virtues of the Queen. In short, these two sovereigns, so intimately united by personal and political interests, merely exhibited on their thrones a picture that may be seen, at any moment, in all the inferior gradations of the social scale, in which the worldly views and meretricious motives of man serve as foils to the truer heart, sincerer character, and more chastened conduct of woman.

Don Fernando now appeared, and he joined in the discourse in a manner to show that he considered himself fully committed to redeem the pledges given by his wife. The historians have told us that he had been won over by the intercessions of a favourite, though the better opinion would seem to be that deference for Isabella, whose pure earnestness in the cause of

virtue often led him from his more selfish policy, lay at the bottom of his compliance. Whatever may have been the motive, however, it is certain that the King never entered into the undertaking with the ardent, zealous endeavours to insure success, which, from that moment, distinguished the conduct of his royal consort.

"We have recovered our truant," said Isabella, as her husband approached, her eyes lighting and her cheeks flushed with a pious enthusiasm, like those of Mercedes de Valverde, who was an entranced witness of all that was passing. We have recovered our truant, and there is not a moment of unnecessary delay to be permitted, until he shall be sent forth on this great voyage. Should he truly attain Cathay and the Indies, it will be a triumph to the Church even exceeding this conquest of the territories of the Moor."

"I am pleased to see Señor Colon at Santa Fé, again," courteously returned the King; "and if he but do the half of that thou seemest to expect, we shall have reason to rejoice that

our countenance hath not been withheld. He may not render the crown of Castile still more powerful, but he may so far enrich himself that, as a subject, he will have difficulty in finding the proper uses for his gold."

"There will always be a use for the gold of a Christian," answered the navigator, "while the Infidel remaineth the master of the Holy Sepulchre."

"How is this!" exclaimed Ferdinand, in his quick, sharp voice: "dost thou think, Señor, of a crusade, as well as of discovering new regions?"

"Such, your Highness, it hath long been my hope, would be the first appropriation of the wealth that will, out of question, flow from the discovery of a new and near route to the Indies. Is it not a blot on Christendom that the Mussulman should be permitted to raise his profane altars on the spot that Christ visited on earth; where, indeed, he was born, and where his holy remains lay until his glorious resurrection? This foul disgrace there are hearts and swords enough ready to wipe out; all that is wanted is

gold. If the first desire of my heart be, to become the instrument of leading the way to the East, by a western and direct passage, the second is, to see the riches that will certainly follow such a discovery, devoted to the service of God, by rearing anew his altars, and reviving his worship, in the land where he endured his agony and gave up the ghost for the sins of men."

Isabella smiled at the navigator's enthusiasm, though, sooth to say, the sentiment found something of an echo in her pious bosom; albeit the age of crusades appeared to have gone by. Not so exactly with Ferdinand: he smiled also, but no answering sentiment of holy zeal was awakened within him. He felt, on the contrary, a strong distrust of the wisdom of committing the care of even two insignificant caravels, and the fate of a sum as small as three thousand crowns, to a visionary who had scarcely made a commencement in one extremely equivocal enterprise before his thoughts were running on the execution of another, that had baffled the united efforts and

pious constancy of all Europe. To him the discovery of a western passage to the Indies and the repossession of the holy sepulchre were results that were equally problematical, and it would have been quite sufficient to incur his distrust to believe in the practicability of either. Here, however, was a man who was about to embark in an attempt to execute the first, holding in reserve the last as a consequence of success in the undertaking in which he was already engaged.

There were a few minutes during which Ferdinand seriously contemplated the defeat of the Genoese's schemes; and had the discourse terminated here, it is uncertain how far his cool and calculating policy might have prevailed over the good faith, sincere integrity, and newly-awakened enthusiasm of his wife.

Fortunately the conversation had gone on while he was meditating on this subject, and when he rejoined the circle he found the Queen and the navigator pursuing the subject with an earnestness that had entirely overlooked his momentary absence.

"I shall show your Highness all that she demandeth," continued Columbus, in answer to a question of the Queen's. "It is my expectation to reach the territories of the Great Khan, the descendant of the monarch who was visited by the Polos a century since; at which time a strong desire to embrace the religion of Christ was manifested by many in that gorgeous court, the sovereign included. We are told in the sacred books of prophecy that the day is to arrive when the whole earth will worship the true and living God; and that time, it would seem, from many signs and tokens that are visible to those who seek them, draweth near, and is full of hope to such as honour God and seek his glory. To bring all those vast regions in subjection to the Church needeth but a constant faith, sustained by the delegated agencies of the priesthood and the protecting hands of princes."

"This hath a seeming probability," observed the Queen, "and Providence so guide us in this mighty undertaking that it may come to pass! Were those Polos pious missionaries, Señor?"

"They were but travellers, men who sought their own advantage, while they were not altogether unmindful of the duties of religion. It may be well, Señora, first to plant the cross in the islands, and thence to spread the truth over the main land. Cipango, in particular, is a promising region for the commencement of the glorious work, which no doubt will proceed with all the swiftness of a miracle."

"Is this Cipango known to produce spices, or ought that may serve to uphold a sinking treasury, and repay us for so much cost and risk?" asked the King, a little inopportunely for the zeal of the two other interlocutors.

Isabella looked pained, the prevailing trait in Ferdinand's character often causing her to feel as affectionate wives are wont to feel when their husbands forget to think, act, or speak up to the level of their own warm-hearted and virtuous propensities; but she suffered no other sign of the passing emotion to escape her.

"According to the accounts of Marco Polo, your Highness," answered Columbus, "earth

hath no richer island. It aboundeth especially in gold, nor are pearls and precious stones at all rare. But all that region is a quarter of infinite wealth and benighted infidelity. Providence seemeth to have united the first with the last, as a reward to the Christian monarch who shall use his power to extend the sway of the Church. The sea thereabouts is covered with smaller islands, Marco telling us that no less than seven thousand four hundred and forty have been enumerated, not one of all which doth not produce some odoriferous tree or plant of delicious perfume. It is then thither, gracious Lord and Lady, my honoured sovereigns, that I propose to proceed at once, leaving all meaner objects to exalt the two kingdoms and to serve the Church. Should we reach Cipango in safety, as by the blessing of God, acting on a zeal and faith that are not easily shaken, I trust we shall be able to do in the course of two months' diligent navigation, it will be my next purpose to pass over to the continent, and seek the Khan himself in his kingdom of Cathay. The day that my foot

touches the land of Asia will be a glorious day for Spain, and for all who have had a part in the accomplishment of so great an enterprise!"

Ferdinand's keen eyes were riveted on the navigator, as he thus betrayed his hopes with the quiet but earnest manner of deep enthusiasm, and he might have been at a loss himself just at that moment to have analyzed his own feelings. The picture of wealth that Columbus had conjured to his imagination, was as enticing as his cold and calculating habits of distrust and caution rendered it questionable. Isabella heard only, or thought only, of the pious longings of her pure spirit for the conversion and salvation of the infidels, and thus each of the two sovereigns had a favourite impulse to bind him or her to the prosecution of the voyage.

After this the conversation entered more into details, and the heads of the terms demanded by Columbus were gone over again, and approved of by those who were most interested in the matter. All thought of the Arch-

bishop and his objections was momentarily lost, and had the Genoese been a monarch treating with monarchs, he could not have had more reason to be satisfied with the respectful manner in which his terms were heard. Even his proposal to receive one-eighth of the profits of this and all future expeditions to the places he might discover, on condition of his advancing an equal proportion of the outfits, was cheerfully acceded to; making him at once a partner with the crown in the risks and benefits of the many undertakings that it was hoped would follow from the success of this.

Luis de St. Angel and Alonzo de Quintanilla quitted the royal presence in company with Columbus. They saw him to his lodgings, and left him with a respect and cordiality of manner that cheered a heart which had lately been so bruised and disappointed. As they walked away in company, the former, who, notwithstanding the liberality of his views and his strong support of the navigator, was not apt to suppress his thoughts, opened a dialogue in the following manner.

"By all the Saints! friend Alonzo," he exclaimed, "but this Colon carrieth it with a high hand among us, and in a way sometimes to make me doubt the prudence of our interference. He hath treated with the two sovereigns like a monarch, and like a monarch hath he carried his point!"

"Who hath aided him more than thyself, friend Luis?" returned Alonzo de Quintanilla; "for without thy bold assault on Doña Isabella's patience, the matter had been decided against this voyage, and the Genoese would still be on his way to the court of King Louis."

"I regret it not; the chance of keeping the Frenchman within modest bounds being worth a harder effort. Her Highness—Heaven and all the Saints unite to bless her for her upright intentions and generous thoughts—will never regret the trifling cost, even though bootless, with so great an aim in view. But now the thing is done, I marvel myself that a Queen of Castile and a King of Aragon should grant such conditions to an unknown and name-

less seafarer; one that hath neither services, family nor gold to recommend him!"

"Hath he not had Luis de St. Angel of his side?"

"That hath he," returned the receiver-general, "and that right stoutly too; and for good and sufficient cause. I only marvel at our success, and at the manner in which this Colon hath borne himself in the affair. I much feared that the high price he set upon his services might ruin all our hopes."

"And yet thou didst reason with the Queen as if thou thoughtest it insignificant compared with the good that would come of the voyage."

"Is there ought wonderful in this, my worthy friend? We consume our means in efforts to obtain our ends, and while suffering under the exhaustion, begin first to see the other side of the question. I am chiefly surprised at mine own success! As for this Genoese, he is truly a most wonderful man, and, in my heart, I think him right in demanding such high

conditions. If he succeed, who so great as he? and if he fail, the conditions will do him no good, and Castile little harm."

"I have remarked, Señor de St. Angel, that when grave men set a light value on themselves, the world is apt to take them at their word, though willing enough to laugh at the pretensions of triflers. After all, the high demands of Colon may have done him much service, since their Highnesses could not but feel that they were negotiating with one who had faith in his own projects."

"It is much as thou sayest, Alonzo; men often prizing us as we seem to prize ourselves, so long as we act at all up to the level of our pretensions. But there is sterling merit in this Colon, to sustain him in all that he sayeth and doth; wisdom of speech, dignity and gravity of mien, and nobleness of feeling and sentiment. Truly, I have listened to the man when he hath seemed inspired!"

"Well, he hath now good occasion to manifest whether this inspiration be of the true

quality or not," returned the other. "Of a verity, I often distrust the wisdom of our own conclusions."

In this manner did even these two zealous friends of Columbus discuss his character and chances of success; for, while they were among the most decided of his supporters, and had discovered the utmost readiness to uphold him when his cause seemed hopeless, now that the means were likely to be afforded to allow him to demonstrate the justice of his opinions, doubts and misgivings beset their minds. Such is human nature. Opposition awakens our zeal, quickens our apprehension, stimulates our reason and emboldens our opinions; while, thrown back upon ourselves for the proofs of what we have been long stoutly maintaining under the pressure of resistance, we begin to distrust the truth of our own theories, and to dread the demonstrations of a failure. Even the first disciples of the Son of God faltered most in their faith as his predictions were being realized; and most reformers are never so dog-

matical and certain as when battling for their principles, or so timid and wavering as when they are about to put their own long-cherished plans in execution. In all this, we might see a wise provision of Providence, which gives us zeal to overcome difficulties, and prudence when caution and moderation become virtues rather than faults.

Although Luis de St. Angel and his friend conversed thus freely together, however, they did not the less continue true to their original feelings. Their doubts were transient and of little account; and it was remarked of them, whenever they were in the presence of Columbus, himself, that the calm, steady, but deeply seated enthusiasm of that extraordinary man, did not fail to carry with him the opinions not only of these steady supporters, but those of most other listeners.

CHAPTER X.

— Song is on thy hills:
O sweet and mournful melodies of Spain,
That lull'd my boyhood, how your memory thrills
The exile's heart with sudden-wakening pain!
The Forest Sanctuary.

From the moment that Isabella pledged her royal word to support Columbus in his great design, all reasonable doubts of the sailing of the expedition ceased, though few anticipated any results of importance. Of so much greater magnitude, indeed, did the conquest of the kingdom of Granada appear, at that instant, than any probable consequences which could follow from this novel enterprise, that the latter was almost overlooked in the all-absorbing interest that was connected with the former.

There was one youthful and generous heart, however, all of whose hopes were concentrated

in the success of the great voyage. It is scarcely necessary to add, we mean that of Mercedes de Valverde. She had watched the recent events as they occurred, with an intensity of expectation that perhaps none but the youthful, fervent, inexperienced, and uncorrupted, can feel; and now that all her hopes were about to be realized, a tender and generous joy diffused itself over her whole moral system, in a way to render her happiness, for the time, even blissful. Although she loved so truly and with so much feminine devotedness, nature had endowed this warm-hearted young creature with a sagacity and readiness of apprehension, which, when quickened by the sentiments that are so apt to concentrate all the energies of her sex, showed her the propriety of the distrust of the Queen and her guardian, and fully justified their hesitation in her eyes, which were rather charmed than blinded by the ascendency of her passion. She knew too well what was due to her virgin fame, her high expectations, her great name, and her elevated position near the person, and in the immediate

confidence, of Isabella, even to wish her hand unworthily bestowed; and while she deferred, with the dignity and discretion of birth and female decorum, to all that opinion and prudence could have a right to ask of a noble maiden, she confided in her lover's power to justify her choice, with the boundless confidence of a woman. Her aunt had taught her to believe that this voyage of the Genoese was likely to lead to great events, and her religious enthusiasm, like that of the Queen, led her to expect most of that which she so fervently wished.

During the time it was known to those near the person of Isabella, that the conditions between the sovereigns and the navigator were being reduced to writing, and were receiving the necessary forms, Luis neither sought an interview with his mistress, nor was accidentally favoured in that way; but, no sooner was it understood Columbus had effected all that he deemed necessary in this particular, and had quitted the Court for the coast, than the young man threw himself, at once, on the generosity

of his aunt, beseeching her to favour his views now that he was about to leave Spain on an adventure that most regarded as desperate. All he asked was a pledge of being well received by his mistress and her friends, on his return successful.

"I see that thou hast taken a lesson from this new master of thine," answered the high-souled but kind-hearted Beatriz, smiling— "and would fain have thy terms also. But thou knowest, Luis, that Mercedes de Valverde is no peasant's child to be lightly cared for; but that she cometh of the noblest blood of Spain, having had a Guzman for a mother, and Mendozas out of number among her kinsmen. She is, moreover, one of the richest heiresses of Castile; and it would ill become her guardian to forget her watchfulness, under such circumstances, in behalf of one of the idle wanderers of Christendom, simply because he happeneth to be her own beloved brother's son."

"And if the Doña Mercedes be all thou sayest, Señora — and thou hast not even touched upon her highest claims to merit, her

heart, her beauty, her truth and her thousand virtues — but if she be all that thou sayest, Doña Beatriz, is a Bobadilla unworthy of her?"

"How! if she be, moreover, all *thou* sayest too, Don Luis! The heart, the truth, and the thousand virtues! Methinks a shorter catalogue might content one who is himself so great a rover, lest some of these qualities be lost in his many journeys!"

Luis laughed, in spite of himself, at the affected seriousness of his aunt; and then successfully endeavouring to repress a little resentment that her language awakened, he answered in a way to do no discredit to a well-established reputation for good-nature.

"I cannot call thee 'Daughter-Marchioness,' in imitation of her Highness," he answered, with a coaxing smile, so like that her deceased brother was wont to use when disposed to wheedle her out of some concession, that it fairly caused Doña Beatriz to start — "but I can say with more truth, 'Aunt-Marchioness,' — and a very dear aunt, too — wilt thou visit a

little youthful indiscretion so severely? I had hoped, now Colon was about to set forth, that all was forgotten in the noble and common end we have in view."

"Luis," returned the aunt, regarding her nephew with the severe resolution that was so often exhibited in her acts, as well as in her words, "dost think that a mere display of courage will prove sufficient to win Mercedes from me? to put to sleep the vigilance of her friends? to gain the approbation of her guardian? Learn, too confident boy, that Mercedes de Guzman was the companion of my childhood; my warmest, dearest friend, next to her Highness; and that she put all faith in my disposition to do full justice by her child. She died by slow degrees, and the fate of the orphan was often discussed between us. That she could ever become the wife of any but a Christian noble, neither of us imagined possible; but there are so many different characters under the same outward professions, that names deceived us not. I do believe that poor woman bethought her more of her child's future

worldly fortunes, than of her own sins, and that she prayed oftener for the happy conclusion of the first, than for the pardon of the last! Thou knowest little of the strength of a mother's love, Luis, and canst not understand all the doubts that beset the heart, when the parent is compelled to leave a tender plant, like Mercedes, to the cold nursing of a selfish and unfeeling world."

"I can readily fancy the mother of my love fitted for heaven without the usual interpositions of masses and paters, Doña Beatriz; but have aunts no consideration for nephews as well as mothers for children?"

"The tie is close and strong, my child, and yet is it not parental; nor art thou a sensitive, true-hearted enthusiastic girl, filled with the confidence of thy purity, and overflowing with the affections that in the end make mothers what they are."

"By San Iago! and am I not the very youth to render such a creature happy? I, too, am sensitive—too much so, in sooth, for my own peace; I, too, am true-hearted, as is seen by my

having had but this one love when I might have had fifty; and if I am not exactly overflowing with the confidence of purity, I have the confidence of youth, health, strength and courage, which is quite as useful for a cavalier; and I have abundance of the affection that makes good fathers, which is all that can reasonably be asked of a man."

"Thou, then, thinkest thyself, truant, every way worthy to be the husband of Mercedes de Valverde?"

"Nay, aunt of mine, thou hast a searching way with thy questions! Who is, or can be, exactly worthy of so much excellence? I may not be altogether *deserving* of her; but, then again, I am not altogether *undeserving* of her. I am quite as noble, nearly as well endowed with estates, of suitable years, of fitting address as a knight, and love her better than I love my own soul. Methinks the last should count for something, since he that loveth devotedly will surely strive to render its object happy."

"Thou art a silly, inexperienced boy, with

a most excellent heart, a happy careless disposition, and a head that was made to hold better thoughts than commonly reside there!" exclaimed the aunt, giving way to an impulse of natural feeling, even while she frowned on her nephew's folly. "But, hear me, and for once think gravely and reflect on what I say. I have told thee of the mother of Mercedes, of her dying doubts, her anxiety, and of her confidence in me. Her Highness and I were alone with her the morning of the day that her spirit took its flight to heaven; and then she poured out all her feelings in a way that has left on us both an impression that can never cease while ought can be done by either for the security of the daughter's happiness. Thou hast thought the Queen unkind. I know not but, in thy intemperate speech, thou hast dared to charge her Highness with carrying her care for her subjects' well being — beyond a sovereign's rights"—

"Nay, Doña Beatriz," hastily interrupted Luis, "herein thou dost me great injustice. I may have felt—no doubt I *have* keenly, bit-

terly felt—the consequences of Doña Isabella's distrust of my constancy ; but never has rebel thought of mine even presumed to doubt her right to command all our services as well as all our lives. This is due to her sacred authority from all; but we, who so well know the heart and motives of the Queen, also know that she doth nought from caprice or a desire to rule, while she doth so much from affection to her people."

As Don Luis uttered this with an earnest look and features flushed with sincerity, it was impossible not to see that he meant as much as he said. If men considered the consequences that often attend their lightest words, less levity of speech would be used, and the office of tale-bearer, the meanest station in the whole catalogue of social rank, would become extinct for want of occupation. Few cared less, or thought less, about the consequences of what they uttered, than Luis de Bobadilla; and yet this hasty but sincere reply did him good service with more than one of those who exercised a material influence over his fortunes.

The honest praise of the Queen went directly to the heart of the Marchioness, who rather idolized than loved her royal mistress, the long and close intimacy that had existed between them having made her thoroughly acquainted with the pure and almost holy character of Isabella; and when she repeated the words of her nephew to the latter, her own well-established reputation for truth caused them to be implicitly believed. Whatever may be the correctness of our views in general, one of the most certain ways to the feelings is the assurance of being respected and esteemed; while of all the divine mandates, the most difficult to find obedience is that which tells us to "love those who hate" us. Isabella, notwithstanding her high destiny and lofty qualities, was thoroughly a woman; and when she discovered that in spite of her own coldness to the youth, he really entertained so much profound deference for her character, and appreciated her feelings and motives in a way that conscience told her she merited, she was much better disposed to look at his peculiar faults with indulgence, and to

ascribe that to mere animal spirits which under less favourable auspices might possibly have been mistaken for ignoble propensities.

But this is a little anticipating events. The first consequence of Luis's speech was a milder expression in the countenance of his aunt, and a disposition to consider his entreaties to be admitted to a private interview with Mercedes with more indulgence.

"I may have done thee injustice in this, Luis," resumed Doña Beatriz, betraying in her manner the sudden change of feeling mentioned; "for I do think thee conscious of thy duty to her Highness, and of the almost heavenly sense of justice that reigneth in her heart, and through that heart in Castile. Thou hast not lost in my esteem by thus exhibiting thy respect and love for the Queen; for it is impossible to have any regard for female virtue, and not to manifest it to its best representative."

"Do I not, also, dear aunt, in my attachment to thy ward? Is not my very choice, in some sort, a pledge of the truth and justice of my feelings in these particulars?"

"Ah! Luis de Bobadilla, it is not difficult to teach the heart to lean towards the richest and the noblest, when she happeneth also to be the fairest, maiden of Spain!"

"And am I a hypocrite, Marchioness? Dost thou accuse the son of thy brother of being a feigner of that which he doth not feel?—one influenced by so mean a passion as the love of gold and of lands?"

"Foreign lands, heedless boy," returned the aunt, smiling, "but not of others' lands. No, Luis, none that know thee will accuse thee of hypocrisy. We believe in the truth and ardour of thy attachment, and it is for that very cause that we most distrust thy passion."

"How! Are feigned feelings of more repute with the Queen and thyself than real feelings? a spurious and fancied love, than the honest, downright, manly passion?"

"It is this genuine feeling, this honest, downright, manly passion, as thou termest it, which is most apt to awaken sympathy in the tender bosom of a young girl. There is no truer touchstone by which to try the faithful-

ness of feelings than the heart when the head is not turned by vanity; and the more unquestionable the passion, the easier is it for its subject to make the discovery. Two drops of water do not glide together more naturally than two hearts, nephew, when there is a strong affinity between them. Didst thou not really love Mercedes as my near and dear relative, thou mightst laugh and sing in her company at all times that should be suitable for the dignity of a maiden, and it would not cause me an uneasy moment."

"I am thy near and dear relative, aunt of mine, with a miracle! and yet it is more difficult for me to get a sight of thy ward"—

"Who is the especial care of the Queen of Castile."

"Well, be it so; and why should a Bobadilla be proscribed by even a Queen of Castile?"

Luis then had recourse to his most persuasive powers; and improving the little advantage he had gained by dint of coaxing and teasing, he so far prevailed on Doña Beatriz as to ob-

tain a promise that she would apply to the Queen for permission to grant him one private interview with Mercedes. We say the Queen, since Isabella, distrusting the influence of blood, had cautioned the Marchioness on this subject; and the prudence of letting the young people see each other, as little as possible, had been fully settled between them. It was in redeeming this promise that the aunt related the substance of the conversation that has just been given, and mentioned to her royal mistress the state of her nephew's feelings as respected herself. The effect of such information was necessarily favourable to the young man's views, and one of its first fruits was the desired permission to have the interview he sought.

"They are not sovereigns," remarked the Queen, with a smile that the favourite could see was melancholy, though it surpassed her means of penetration to say whether it proceeded from a really saddened feeling, or whether it were merely the manner in which the mind is apt to glance backward at emotions that it is known can never be again awakened in our

bosoms; — "they are not sovereigns, Daughter-Marchioness, to woo by proxy, and wed as strangers. It may not be wise to suffer the intercourse to become too common; but it were cruel to deny the youth, as he is about to depart on an enterprise of so doubtful issue, one opportunity to declare his passion and to make his protestations of constancy. If thy ward hath, in truth, any tenderness for him, the recollection of this interview will soothe many a weary hour while Don Luis is away."

"And add fuel to the flame," returned Doña Beatriz, pointedly.

"We know not that, my good Beatriz; since, the heart being softened by the power of God to a sense of its religious duties, may not the same kind hand direct it and shield it in the indulgence of its more worldly feelings? Mercedes will never forget her duty; and, the imagination feeding itself, it may not be the wisest course to leave that of an enthusiast like our young charge, so entirely to its own pictures. Realities are often less hazardous than the creatures of the fancy. Then, thy nephew

will not be a loser by the occasion; for, by keeping constantly in view the object he now seemeth to pursue so earnestly, he will the more endeavour to deserve success."

"I much fear, Señora, that the best conclusions are not to be depended on in an affair that touches the waywardness of the feelings."

"Perhaps not, Beatriz; and yet I do not see that we can well deny this interview, now that Don Luis is so near departure. Tell him I accord him that which he so desireth, and let him bear in mind that a grandee should never quit Castile without presenting himself before his sovereign."

"I fear, your Highness," returned the Marchioness, laughing, "that Don Luis will feel this last command, however gracious and kind in fact, as a strong rebuke; since he hath more than once done this already, without even presenting himself before his own aunt!"

"On those occasions he went idly, and without consideration; but he has now engaged in an honourable and noble enterprise, and we will make it apparent to him that all feel the difference."

The conversation now changed, it being understood that the request of the young man was to be granted. Isabella had, in this instance, departed from a law she had laid down for her own government, under the influence of her womanly feelings, which often caused her to forget that she was a Queen, when no very grave duties existed to keep alive the recollection; for it would have been difficult to decide in which light this pure-minded and excellent female most merited the esteem of mankind — in her high character as a just and conscientious sovereign, or when she acted more directly under the gentler impulses of her sex. As for her friend, she was perhaps more tenacious of doing what she conceived to be her duty, by her ward, than the Queen herself; since, with a greater responsibility, she was exposed to the suspicion of acting with a design to increase the wealth and to strengthen the connections of her own family. Still, the wishes of Isabella were laws to the Marchioness of Moya, and she sought an early opportunity to acquaint her ward with her intention to allow Don Luis, for

once, to plead his own cause with his mistress, before he departed on his perilous and mysterious enterprise.

Our heroine received this intelligence with the mingled sensations of apprehension, delight, misgivings, and joy, that are so apt to beset the female heart, in the freshness of its affections, when once brought in subjection to the master passion. She had never thought it possible Luis would sail on an expedition like that in which he was engaged, without endeavouring to see her alone; but, now she was assured that both the Queen and her guardian acquiesced in his being admitted, she almost regretted their compliance. These contradictory emotions, however, soon subsided in the tender melancholy that gradually drew around her manner, as the hour for the departure approached. Nor were her feelings on the subject of Luis's ready enlistment in the expedition, more consistent. At times she exulted in her lover's resolution, and in his manly devotion to glory and the good of the Church; remembering with pride that, of all the high nobility of

Castile, he alone ventured life and credit with the Genoese; and then, again, tormenting doubts came over her, as she feared that the love of roving, and of adventure, was quite as active in his heart, as love of herself. But, in all this there was nothing new. The more pure and ingenuous the feelings of those who truly submit to the influence of this passion, the more keenly alive are their distrusts apt to be, and the more tormenting their misgivings of themselves.

Her mind made up, Doña Beatriz acted fairly by the young people. As soon as Luis was admitted to her own presence, on the appointed morning, she told him that he was expected by Mercedes, who was waiting his appearance in the usual reception-room. Scarcely giving himself time to kiss the hand of his aunt, and to make those other demonstrations of respect that the customs of the age required from the young to their seniors — more especially when there existed between them a tie of blood as close as that which united the Marchioness of Moya with the Conde de Llera —

the young man bounded away, and was soon in the presence of his mistress. As Mercedes was prepared for the interview, she betrayed the feeling of the moment merely by a heightened colour, and the greater lustre of eyes that were always bright, though often so soft and melancholy.

"Luis!" escaped from her, and then, as if ashamed of the emotion betrayed in the very tones of her voice, she withdrew the foot that had involuntarily advanced to meet him, even while she kept a hand extended in friendly confidence.

"Mercedes!" and the hand was withdrawn to put a stop to the kisses with which it was covered. "Thou art harder to be seen, of late, than it will be to discover this Cathay of the Genoese; for, between the Doña Isabella and Doña Beatriz, never was paradise watched more closely by guardian angels, than thy person is watched by thy protectors."

"And can it be necessary, Luis, when thou art the danger apprehended?"

"Do they think I shall carry thee off, like

some Moorish girl borne away on the crupper of a Christian knight's saddle, and place thee in the caravel of Colon, that we may go in search of Prestor John and the Great Khan, in company?"

"They may think *thee* capable of this act of madness, dear Luis, but they will hardly suspect *me*."

"No, thou art truly a model of prudence in all matters that require feeling for thy lover."

"Luis!" exclaimed the girl, again; and this time unbidden tears started to her eyes.

"Forgive me, Mercedes — dearest, dearest Mercedes; but this delay and all these coldly cruel precautions make me forget myself. Am I a needy and unknown adventurer, that they treat me thus, instead of being a noble Castilian knight!"

"Thou forgettest, Luis, that noble Castilian maidens are not wont to see even noble Castilian cavaliers alone; and, but for the gracious condescension of her Highness, and the indulgence of my guardian, who happeneth to be

thy aunt, this interview could not take place."

"Alone!—And dost thou call this being alone, or any excessive favour on the part of her Highness, when thou seest that we are watched by the eye, if not by the ear? I fear to speak above my breath, lest the sounds should disturb that venerable lady's meditations!"

As Luis de Bobadilla uttered this, he glanced his eye at the figure of the dueña of his mistress, whose person was visible through an open door, in an adjoining room, where the good woman sate, intently occupied in reading certain homilies.

"Dost mean my poor Pepita," answered Mercedes, laughing; for the presence of her attendant, to whom she had been accustomed, from infancy, was no more restraint on her own innocent thoughts and words, than would have proved a reduplication of herself, had such a thing been possible. "Many have been her protestations against this meeting, which she insists is contrary to all rule among noble

ladies, and which, she says, would never have been accorded by my poor, sainted mother, were she still living."

"Ay, she hath a look that is sufficient of itself to set every generous mind a-tilting with her. One can see envy of thy beauty and youth, in every wrinkle of her unamiable face."

"Then little dost thou know my excellent Pepita, who envieth nothing, and who hath but one marked weakness, and that is, too much affection, and too much indulgence for myself."

"I detest a dueña; ay, as I detest an infidel!"

"Señor," said Pepita, whose vigilant ears, notwithstanding her book and the homilies, heard all that passed, "this is a common feeling among youthful cavaliers, I fear; but they tell me that the very dueña who is so displeasing to the lover, getteth to be a grateful object, in time, with the husband. As my features and wrinkles, however, are so disagreeable to you, and no doubt cause you pain, by closing this

door the sight will be shut out, as, indeed, will be the sound of my unpleasant cough, and of your own protestations of love, Señor Knight."

This was said in much better language than was commonly used by women of the dueña's class, and with a good-nature that seemed indomitable, it being completely undisturbed by Luis's petulant remarks.

"Thou shalt not close the door, Pepita," cried Mercedes, blushing rosy red, and springing forward to interpose her own hand against the act. "What is there that the Conde de Llera can have to say to one like me, that *thou* mayest not hear?"

"Nay, dear child, the noble cavalier is about to talk of love!"

"And is it thou, with whom the language of affection is so uncommon, that it frighteneth thee! Hath thy discourse been of aught but love, since thou hast known and cared for me?"

"It augureth badly for thy suit, Señor," said Pepita, smiling, while she suspended the movement of the hand that was about to close

the door, " if Doña Mercedes thinketh of your love as she thinketh of mine. Surely, child, thou dost not fancy me a gay, gallant, young noble, come to pour out his soul at thy feet, and mistakest my simple words of affection for such as will be likely to flow from the honeyed tongue of a Bobadilla, bent on gaining his suit with the fairest maiden of Castile ?"

Mercedes shrunk back; for, though innocent as purity itself, her heart taught her the difference between the language of her lover and the language of her nurse, even when eacl most expressed affection. Her hand released its hold of the wood, and unconsciously was laid, with its pretty fellow, on her crimsoned face. Pepita profited by her advantage, and closed the door. A smile of triumph gleamed on the handsome features of Luis; and, after he had forced his mistress, by a gentle compulsion, to resume the seat from which she had risen to meet him, he threw himself on a stool at her feet, and stretching out his well-turned limbs in an easy attitude, so as to allow himself to gaze into the beautiful face that he had set up, like

an idol, before him, he renewed the discourse.

"This is a paragon of dueñas," he cried, "and I might have known that none of the ill-tempered, unreasonable school of such beings would be tolerated near thy person. This Pepita is a jewel, and she may consider herself established in her office for life, if, by the cunning of this Genoese, mine own resolution, the Queen's repentance, and thy gentle favour, I ever prove so lucky as to become thy husband."

"Thou forgettest, Luis," answered Mercedes, trembling even while she laughed at her own conceit, "that if the husband esteemeth the dueña the lover could not endure, that the lover may esteem the dueña that the husband may be unwilling to abide."

"*Peste!* these are crooked matters, and ill-suited to the straight-forward philosophy of Luis de Bobadilla. There is one thing only, which I can, or do, pretend to know, out of any controversy, and that I am ready to maintain in the face of all the doctors of Salamanca, or

all the chivalry of Christendom, that of the Infidel included; which is, that thou art the fairest, sweetest, best, most virtuous, and in all things the most winning maiden of Spain, and that no other living knight so loveth and honoureth his mistress as I love and honour thee!"

The language of admiration is ever soothing to female ears; and Mercedes, giving to the words of the youth an impression of sincerity that his manner fully warranted, forgot the dueña and her little interruption, in the delight of listening to declarations that were so grateful to her affections. Still, the coyness of her sex, and the recent date of their mutual confidence, rendered her answer less open than it might otherwise have been.

"I am told," she said, "that you young cavaliers, who pant for occasions to show your skill and courage with the lance, and in the tourney, are ever making some such protestations in favour of this or that noble maiden, in order to provoke others like themselves to make counter-assertions, that they may show their

prowess as knights, and gain high names for gallantry."

"This cometh of being so much shut up in Doña Beatriz's private rooms, lest some bold Spanish eyes should look profanely on thy beauty, Mercedes. We are not in the age of the errants and the troubadours, when men committed a thousand follies that they might be thought weaker even than nature had made them. In that age, your knights *discoursed* largely of love, but in our own they *feel* it. In sooth, I think this savoureth of some of the profound morality of Pepita!"

"Say nought against Pepita, Luis, who hath much befriended thee to-day, else would thy tongue, and thine eyes, too, be under the restraint of her presence. But that which thou termest the morality of the good dueña, is, in truth, the morality of the excellent and most noble Doña Beatriz de Cabrera, Marchioness of Moya, who was born a lady of the House of Bobadilla, I believe."

"Well, well, I dare to say there is no great difference between the lessons of a duchess and

the lessons of a dueña, in the privacy of the closet, when there is one like thee, beautiful, and rich, and virtuous, to guard. They say you young maidens are told that we cavaliers are so many ogres, and that the only way to reach paradise is to think nought of us but evil, and then, when some suitable marriage hath been decided on, the poor young creature is suddenly alarmed by an order to come forth and be wedded to one of these very monsters."

"And, in this mode hast thou been treated! It would seem that much pains are taken to make the young of the two sexes think ill of each other. But, Luis, this is pure idleness, and we waste in it most precious moments; moments that may never return. How go matters with Colon?—and when is he like to quit the Court?"

"He hath already departed; for, having obtained all he hath sought of the Queen, he quitted Santa Fé, with the royal authority to sustain him in the fullest manner. If thou hearest aught of one Pedro de Muños, or Pero Gutierrez, at the Court of Cathay,

thou wilt know on whose shoulders to lay his follies."

"I would rather that thou shouldst undertake this voyage in thine own name, Luis, than under a feigned appellation. Concealments of this nature are seldom wise, and surely thou dost not undertake the enterprise"— the tell-tale blood stole to the cheeks of Mercedes as she proceeded — "with a motive that need bring shame."

"'Tis the wish of my aunt; as for myself, I would put thy favour in my casque, thy emblem on my shield, and let it be known, far and near, that Luis of Llera sought the Court of Cathay with the intent to defy its chivalry to produce as fair or as virtuous a maiden as thyself."

"We are not in the age of errants, sir knight, but in one of reason and truth," returned Mercedes, laughing, though every syllable that proved the earnest and entire devotion of the young man went directly to her heart, strengthening his hold on it, and increasing the flame that burnt within, by

adding the fuel that was most adapted to that purpose — "we are not in the age of knights-errant, Don Luis de Bobadilla, as thou thyself hast just affirmed; but one in which even the lover is reflecting, and as apt to discover the faults of his lady-love, as to dwell upon her perfections. I look for better things from thee, than to hear that thou hast ridden through the highways of Cathay, defying to combat, and seeking giants, in order to exalt my beauty, and tempting others to decry it, if it were only out of pure opposition to thy idle boastings. Ah! Luis, thou art now engaged in a most truly noble enterprise, one that will join thy name to those of the applauded of men, and which will form thy pride and exultation in after-life, when the eyes of us both shall be dimmed by age, and we shall look back with longings to discover aught of which to be proud."

It was thrice pleasant to the youth to hear his mistress in the innocence of her heart, and in the fulness of her feelings, thus uniting his fate with her own; and when she ceased speak-

ing, all unconscious how much might be indirectly implied from her words, he still listened intently as if he would fain hear the sounds after they had died on his ear.

"What enterprise can be nobler, more worthy to awaken all my resolution, than to win thy hand?" he exclaimed, after a short pause. "I follow Colon with no other object, share his chances to remove the objections of Doña Isabella, and will accompany him to the earth's end rather than that thy choice should be dishonoured. *Thou* art *my* Great Khan, beloved Mercedes, and thy smiles and affection are the only Cathay I seek."

"Say not so, dear Luis; for thou knowest not the nobility of thine own soul, nor the generosity of thine own intentions. This is a stupendous project of Colon's; and much as I rejoice that he hath had the imagination to conceive it, and the heart to undertake it in his own person on account of the good it must produce to the heathen, and the manner in which it will necessarily redound to the glory of God, still I fear that I am equally glad-

dened with the recollection that thy name will be for ever associated with the great achievement, and thy detractors put to shame with the resolution and spirit with which so noble an end will have been attained."

"This is nothing but truth, Mercedes, should we reach the Indies; but, should the Saints desert us, and our project fail, I fear that even thou wouldst be ashamed to confess an interest in an unfortunate adventurer who hath returned without success, and thereby made himself the subject of sneers and derision, instead of wearing the honourable distinction that thou seemest so confidently to expect."

"Then, Luis de Bobadilla, thou knowest me not," answered Mercedes hastily, and speaking with a tender earnestness that brought the blood into her cheeks, gradually brightening the brilliancy of her eyes, until they shone with a lustre that seemed almost supernatural —"then, Luis de Bobadilla, thou knowest me not. I wish thee to share in the glory of this enterprise, because calumny and censure have

not been altogether idle with thy youth, and because I feel that her Highness's favour is most easily obtained by it; but if thou believest that the spirit to engage with Colon was necessary to incline me to think kindly of my guardian's nephew, thou neither understandest the sentiments that draw me towards thee, nor hast a just appreciation of the hours of sorrow I have suffered on thy account."

"Dearest, most generous, noble-hearted girl, I am unworthy of thy truth, of thy pure sincerity, and of all thy devoted feelings! Drive me from thee at once, that I may ne'er again cause thee a moment's grief."

"Nay, Luis, thy remedy, I fear me, would prove worse than the disease that thou wouldst cure," returned the beautiful girl, smiling and blushing as she spoke, and turning her eloquent eyes on the youth in a way to avow volumes of tenderness. "With thee must I be happy or unhappy, as Providence may will it, or miserable without thee."

The conversation now took that unconnected and yet comprehensive cast which is apt to

characterize the discourse of those who feel as much as they reason, and it covered more interests, sentiments, and events than our limits will allow us to record. As usual, Luis was inconsistent, jealous, repentant, full of passion and protestations, fancying a thousand evils at one instant, and figuring in his imagination a terrestrial paradise at the next; while Mercedes was enthusiastic, generous, devoted, and yet high-principled, self-denying, and womanly; meeting her ardent suitor's vows with a tenderness that seemed to lose all other considerations in her love, and repelling, with maiden coyness and with the dignity of her sex, his rhapsodies, whenever they touched upon the exaggerated and indiscreet.

The interview lasted an hour, and it is scarcely necessary to say that vows of constancy, and pledges never to marry another were given again and again. As the time for separating approached, Mercedes opened a small casket that contained her jewels, and drew forth one which she offered to her lover as a gage of her truth.

"I will not give thee a glove to wear in thy casque at tourneys, Luis," she said; "but I offer this holy symbol, which may remind thee at the same moment of the great pursuit thou hast before thee, and of her who will wait its issue with doubts and fears little less active than those of Colon himself. Thou needst no other crucifix to say thy paters before, and these stones are sapphires, which thou knowest are the tokens of fidelity — a feeling that thou mayst encourage as respects thy lasting welfare, and which it would not grieve me to know thou keptest ever active in thy bosom when thinking of the unworthy giver of the trifle."

This was said half in melancholy and half in lightness of heart; for Mercedes felt at parting both a weight of sorrow that was hard to be borne, and a buoyancy of the very feeling to which she had just alluded that much disposed her to smile; and it was said with those winning accents with which the youthful and tender avow their emotions, when the heart is subdued by the thoughts of absence and dangers. The gift was a small cross, formed of the stones she had named, and of great in-

trinsic value, as well as precious from the motives and character of her who offered it.

"Thou hast had a care of my soul in this, Mercedes," said Luis, smiling, when he had kissed the jewelled cross again and again — "and art resolved, if the sovereign of Cathay should refuse to be converted to our faith, that we shall not be converted to his. I fear that my offering will appear tame and valueness in thine eyes after so precious a boon."

"One lock of thy hair, Luis, is all I desire. Thou knowest that I have no need of jewels."

"If I thought the sight of my bushy head would give thee pleasure, every hair should quit it, and I would sail from Spain with a poll as naked as a priest's, or even an infidel's; but the Bobadillas have their jewels, and a Bobadilla's bride shall wear them; this necklace was my mother's, Mercedes; it is said to have once been the property of a queen, though none have ever worn it who will so honour it as thou."

"I take it, Louis, for it is thy offering, and may not be refused; and yet I take it tremblingly, for I see signs of our different natures

in these gifts. Thou hast chosen the gorgeous and the brilliant, which pall in time, and seldom lead to contentment; while my woman's heart hath led me to constancy. I fear some brilliant beauty of the East would better gain thy lasting admiration than a poor Castilian maid who hath little but her faith and love to recommend her!"

Protestations on the part of the young man followed, and Mercedes permitted one fond and long embrace ere they separated. She wept on the bosom of Don Luis, and at the final moment of parting, as ever happens with woman, feeling got the better of form, and her whole soul confessed its weakness. At length Luis tore himself away from her presence, and that night he was on his way to the coast under an assumed name and in simple guise, whither Columbus had already preceded him.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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